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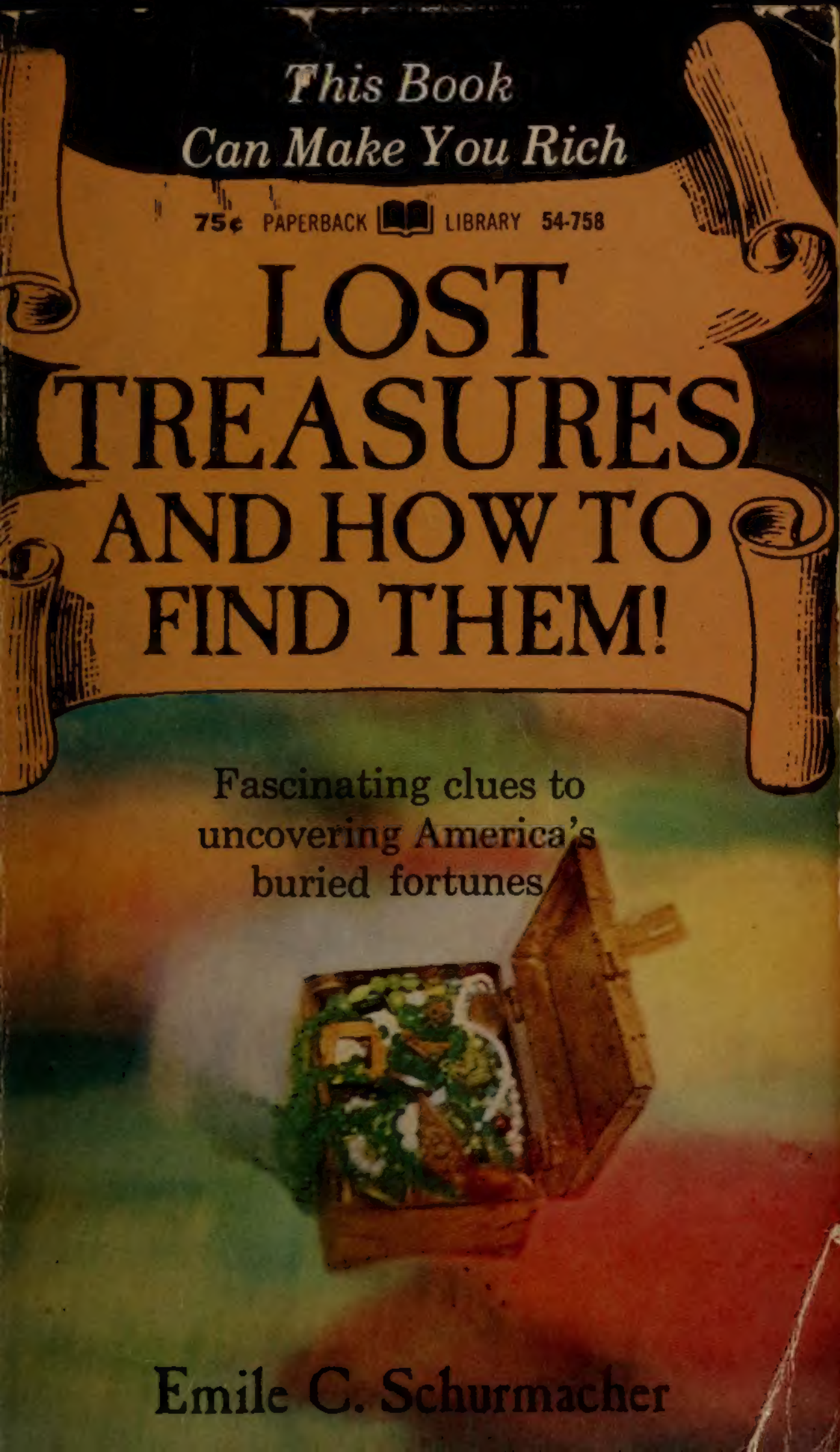
LOST TREASURES AND HOW TO FIND THEM!

Fascinating clues to uncovering America's buried fortunes



Emile C. Schurmacher

EXCITING TRUE ACCOUNTS OF AMERICA'S MOST FABULOUS TREASURE TROVES—PLUS SUGGESTIONS ON HOW YOU CAN LOCATE THEM

Would you like to dig up a cache of gold or silver ingots, a sack of rare coins, a chest of precious jewels or a hoard of valuable heirlooms?

From Maine to California, and north and south of our national borders, a vast number of such caches await your discovery. These hoards, estimated to be worth billions, were buried by a colorful and fascinating cast of characters—bandits, stagecoach robbers, hijackers, gangsters, adventurers, eccentrics, recluses and others—whom you will meet in the pages of this book.

Also included is a list of hundreds of locations of buried treasures in the United States. One of them may be in your own backyard!

LOST TREASURES AND HOW TO FIND THEM!

by Emile C. Schurmacher

PAPERBACK LIBRARY

New York

PAPERBACK LIBRARY EDITION
First Printing: December, 1968

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INTRODUCTION

Would you like to dig up a cache of gold or silver ingots, a sack of rare coins, a chest of precious jewels or a hoard of valuable heirlooms?

From Maine to California, and north and south of our national borders, a vast number of such caches await discovery. Some have an intrinsic value of only a few hundred dollars but are worth a great deal more as antiques, collectors' items or historic relics. Others may be worth millions.

Many were hidden in a bygone era when valuables were not as transportable—or convertible—as they are today. Some were buried in the more recent past by individuals who, for various reasons, did not entrust them to safes, safe-deposit boxes, storage warehouses or the anonymity of numbered accounts in Swiss banks.

These hoards were buried by a colorful and fascinating cast of characters: bandits, stagecoach robbers, hijackers, gangsters, adventurers, eccentrics, recluses and others whom you will meet in the following chapters. Collectively, their caches within the United States are estimated by historians, law enforcement agencies and other competent authorities to total more *billions* than all the treasure lost by shipwreck, fire and piracy in the waters of the Western Hemisphere since the earliest days of the Spanish galleons.

Unlike sunken treasure, searching for which frequently presents formidable obstacles and a varying degree of personal danger, and requires experience, diving gear and other equipment, many treasure caches on land are buried in areas accessible to treasure hunters.

Most can be sought at little if any risk and at comparatively low cost. Some THs—treasure hunters—even

carry a spade in the trunk of their car, along with jack and lug wrench, and dig in a likely area on a weekend drive.

Some cache areas are better known than others. One immense hoard, estimated at about twenty million dollars, is buried near Temple, Texas. It was hidden by Karl Steinheimer, a German immigrant slave trader who was fearful that a roving band of Indians was about to attack his packtrain—as detailed in a chapter of this book.

Another challenging cache, fifteen oxcart loads of gold and silver plate, bags of coins and chests of precious jewels estimated by historians to have an intrinsic value of five million dollars, was the personal fortune of the ill-starred Emperor Ferdinand Maximilian, whose three-year, tempestuous rule over Mexico was abruptly ended by the bullets of a firing squad in June, 1867. Maximilian's trove remains undiscovered in the vicinity of Castle Gap, Texas, approximately a score of miles east of the Pecos River.

Among other classic hoards chronicled in these pages is that of Joaquin Murietta, youthful leader of a California band of murderous outlaws.

As for more modern troves, some also contain well over a million dollars. One of the most publicized and dramatic was the $1,218,211. in cash and $1,557,183. in checks and money orders stolen in Boston in 1950 in the robbery of Brink's, Inc.

When three of the participants, Adolph Maffie, James Faherty and Michael Geagan, were sentenced in 1956 to spend the rest of their natural lives in the Correctional Institution at Walpole, Massachusetts, more than a million dollars in currency remained unrecovered.

On August 14, 1962, less than twelve years after and not more than forty miles away from the scene of the Brink's robbery, a U.S. mail truck manned by Post Office employees was held up and looted of $1,551,277., the largest cash robbery recorded in the United States.

The results of these two holdups, together, amounting to more than 2.5 million dollars, are but a small fraction of the billions of stolen loot hidden throughout the country. One trove, that of the notorious gangster Dutch Schultz, is buried in New York's Catskill Mountains area and is estimated at seven million dollars.

Vast amounts of "hot" loot are buried by criminals to

"cool" until after pursuit and hue and cry subside—and in the expectation that a sizable stake will be awaiting them on their release from prison, if they should be caught.

But before they can retrieve their hidden plunder, some are killed, some succumb to natural causes. One of these, as told in a chapter of this book, was John Dillinger. He and his gang accumulated more than a million dollars in a series of daring holdups. They cached the money in suitcases in the vicinity of Leipsic, Ohio, intending to leave it buried until the heat was off.

They never returned to the cache. Dillinger was shot to death by FBI agents, and his mob was rounded up. All that was ever recovered of the loot netted in four bank robberies was approximately $25,000. that Dillinger had hidden elsewhere for getaway money.

Then too, what is particularly frustrating to many such individuals who bury money in a hurry is the possibility that landmarks may vanish through natural causes such as floods, landslides or sandstorms, or because of man-made changes in roads and buildings.

There have been many instances in which criminals cached their treasure in virgin forest and, on returning years later, found that the trees had been cleared, the forest converted into farms.

In some cases where they buried their loot in or near rural communities, landmarks were erased by highways and even suburban developments.

Such conditions do not always diminish opportunities for treasure hunters nor for the accidental discovery of a trove.

An illustration: a farmer, George Hardsook, was digging in his field near Claremont, Oklahoma, when he unearthed a rotting canvas bag containing $37,000. in twenty-dollar gold pieces.

Newspapers reported his find, and a one-time member of the Jesse James gang, Kit Dalton, showed up in Claremont to claim the money. He said that it was part of the loot from a $70,000. train robbery at Mosscrest, Oklahoma.

What was more, Dalton had the audacity to take his claim to court where he testified that he was entitled to the money because he was the only living member of the gang that had stolen it. When, he said, he had returned years

later to dig up the loot, which had been buried at the base of a large cottonwood, he had been greatly chagrined to find that the tree was no longer there. The judge threw his claim out of court, and Hardsook was permitted to keep the $37,000.

Much of the treasure buried throughout the United States is connected with our country's history or geography as well as with ordinary human greed.

In Revolutionary times British army paymasters were a favorite target. Some were held up by bands of American patriots. More often than not these "patriots" were lawless characters who cached the loot instead of turning it over to superior officers.

The wagon trains of pioneers trekking west and northwest were plundered both by hostile Indians and renegade whites. As the west was being won, outlaws, "road agents," bandit gangs and all varieties of opportunists robbed mining camps, express offices and stagecoaches.

Western fiction and TV dramas to the contrary, many of the stage coach holdups, particularly when gold was being transported from the mines to banks or railheads, were more spectacular than lucrative.

Gold was simply too heavy to be carried off in large quantities by a mounted outlaw. When he ordered a driver to "throw down the box," if he were smart, he tempered avarice with practicality and galloped off with ninety to a hundred pounds at most. This is why many of the caches made by lone stagecoach bandits do not exceed about $50,000.—figuring gold at the present price of $35.00 per ounce.

Larger hauls were made by organized gangs—such as the Carey Gang—Jim Carey and his two trigger-happy pals, Al Speer and Doug Goodale.

When they held up the Treasury Express, a stagecoach operating between Deadwood City, South Dakota, and Sidney, Nebraska, they made off with 400 pounds of gold ingots belonging to the Homestake Mining Company. Carey had foresightedly driven a buckboard to the Canyon Springs relay station, the scene of the robbery, in order to transport their spoils. The story is related in one of the chapters.

Looting and caching of treasure was widely indulged in by both factions during the Civil War. It was practiced by some of the regular army units and by freewheeling guerrillas like William C. Quantrell, who ravaged a number of Kansas towns. Estimates of his buried loot range as high as two million dollars.

As a precaution against just such looting by invading troops, many wealthy plantation owners, in Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama, Georgia and the Carolinas buried millions of dollars worth of family jewelry and heirlooms.

One such hoard awaiting discovery consists of approximately three million dollars worth of gold and silver plate and jewelry contributed by patriotic Southerners to the Confederate treasury. It was meant to purchase arms and ammunition in England.

All of this treasure was safely transported to Richmond, Virginia, during February and March, 1865. But the night of April 1, 1865, two days before the fall of the city, a band of guerrillas led by a former Confederate sergeant, Jim Surry, murdered the four-man Treasury guard and fled with the entire amount.

They got as far as the James River, where they found themselves trapped between pursuing troops from Richmond and reinforcements marching northward from Petersburg. There they buried the treasure, just before Surry and his eleven followers were wiped out to the last man.

Prohibition and its gang wars ushered in an era of treasure-caching in localities convenient to large cities. No one, including the FBI and the Internal Revenue Service, can make a realistic guess of the hoards buried in Cook County, Illinois, by bootleggers, hijackers and other mobsters.

In the early 1930s, prior to the passage of the Gold Reserve Act of 1934, there was a short but intensive era of gold hiding. One of the greatest and most intriguing of these troves, as related further on in detail, consists of twenty million dollars in ingots buried by a syndicate of wealthy Mexicans in the northwest corner of New Mexico. It remains where it was hidden in 1935, because the owners did not dare dig it up for fear of Federal prosecution.

By no means all of the following chapters deal with enormous treasure caches. Some, detailing lesser hoards, such as those of Patty Cannon, of Snowshoe Thompson, Tom Sing, and the Cisco "Santa Claus" are included in order to show the wide range of geography—and motivation—involved in the burial of treasure.

This brings up the question of whether troves are ever found. The answer is yes, and more frequently than is generally believed. Some of the finders shy away from publicity in order to evade taxes. Some, more lawfully, report their discoveries quietly to the Internal Revenue Service and hope to escape the notice of the share-the-wealth army of schemers, blue-sky salesmen, legitimate but overly aggressive salesmen and solicitors for dubious charities and causes. Others maintain silence in the hope that further search at the site of their find will result in further finds.

Some encouraging—and reported—examples of trove finds:

A couple seeking "pretty stones" near Julesburg, Colorado, unearthed four rotting saddlebags containing $86,000. in gold pieces.

Approximately $120,000. in old gold and silver coins buried by a recluse was found on a farm in Oley Valley, Pennsylvania.

On Grassy Key, Florida, a $25,000. cache of Mexican coins, a golden candlestick and a diamond ring were all found together in a large iron pot.

On Matagorda Island, near Corpus Christi, Texas, three treasure hunters dug up two heavy chests of coins bearing eighteenth century dates and worth more than $80,000.

A mountain lion hunter in northern Arizona discovered in a small cave a wooden chest containing almost $100,000. worth of silver ingots.

Two youngsters, digging on a Vicksburg, Mississippi, cotton plantation, found family heirlooms buried during the Civil War. The valuables were appraised at $165,000.

A vacationer and his teen-age son found a sack of coins that had been hidden near Colebrook, New Hampshire, in about 1850. The money was worth $41,000.

Two Eastern college students hunting for fossils in the vicinity of Leadville South Dakota, dug up a stagecoach

box containing $92,000. in gold.

The list goes on and on. Nor are such troves discovered only in remote or secluded areas. In the heart of Brooklyn, New York, for example, $525,750. was discovered in the walls and basement floor where a recluse named Louise Herle had lived. Inasmuch as she was known to have been worth more than 1.5 million dollars and the balance never turned up in banks or anywhere else, it is reasonable to assume that it is still cached somewhere else.

In Chicago, Illinois, bank representatives found $100,000. in gold coins bearing dates of the 1930s. The gold was buried under two fruit trees on the estate of the late Stanley R. Pierce, wealthy investment broker.

In the appendix is a regional listing of treasure troves throughout the country. Understandably, there are thousands of others, far and near, awaiting discovery.

The most intriguing possibility is, of course, that if you search for treasure, you may even turn up a cache in your own backyard!

CHAPTER 1

J. Murietta & Co., Specialists in Robbery and Murder

Of the numerous highwaymen and stagecoach robbers who operated throughout the West after James W. Marshall, a New Jersey mechanic, discovered gold at Coloma on the south branch of the American River on January 24, 1848, none was more ruthless nor more active than Joaquin Murietta, youthful leader of a band of murderous outlaws.

During his brief career, which ended violently when he was twenty-four, he set a record for plundering that many bandits who came after him, among them such colorful characters as Tiburcio Vasquez, Tom Bell, Charles E. Bolles alias Black Bart, and Rattlesnake Dick, never approached. Murietta was both the prototype and the greatest of them all.

With the influx of thousands of "Forty-niners," by 1851 the annual output of gold in California had risen to fifty-five million dollars. Many miners had already struck it rich in the foothills of the Sierras and were returning to Sacramento and San Francisco with gold dust in their pokes and nuggets in their flour sacks.

The stagecoach had made its appearance in 1849, the pioneer line established by John Whistman over a route of some fifty miles between San Francisco and San Jose. By 1851 stagecoach routes had been extended to several of the more popular mining centers, and gold was being transported "out" in the strongboxes of Concords, the tough, excellently-crafted coaches made by the famous Abbott-Downing Company of Concord, New Hampshire.

In 1851 miners who had struck it rich and were returning from their claims traveled afoot with packhorses or mules, or on horseback. Many of them made long journeys alone or with only a few companions. Those who remained

and shipped out their accumulated gold did so by stagecoaches, which were still comparatively unprotected.

Only some of the drivers carried arms, for their instructions, following the earliest of the stagecoach robberies, were: "Run, don't fight." The guards hired to protect the coaches by "riding shotgun," usually on the seats with the drivers, gradually appeared later.

Thus the scene was set, the opportunity waiting for Joaquin Murietta.

His real name was Joaquin Carillo, and he was born in Sonora, Mexico, the son of a farmer.

In his teens he fell in love with an attractive, dark-haired girl, Rosita Feliz, the only daughter of a prosperous neighboring rancher.

They wanted to marry, but Rosita's father refused to give them permission. Although he had declared to Joaquin that his seventeen-year-old daughter was too young for marriage, Rosita told Joaquin that her parents were planning to take her to Mexico City to make a much more advantageous match.

Joaquin and Rosita, very much in love, made some plans of their own. One night he stole two of his father's horses, paid a clandestine call at the Feliz ranch and eloped with Rosita. They fled northward. She donned men's clothes, he changed his name to Murietta, and they traveled to the Santa Clara Valley, where he took a job as a digger in the booming Calaveras gold fields.

They built a small cabin and were happy for about a month until a miners' committee paid them a visit. The miners ordered them to pull up stakes and leave because they didn't want any "thieving Mexicans hanging 'round the settlement." To emphasize their point, Murietta was flogged, and Rosita was raped by several of the miners.

Murietta and his sweetheart headed for Marysville, but when they came to the small mining settlement of Murphy's Diggings, they found a fertile piece of land suitable for homesteading and built another cabin.

Some weeks later they were joined by Murietta's brother, Luis, who came up from Mexico. At Joaquin's suggestion he homesteaded some adjoining land, built himself a cabin and prepared to plant his first crop of corn and wheat.

Joaquin might have lived and died an obscure, peaceful farmer but for an incident destined shortly to change his entire life.

It began when a shady character named Hansen stole a pack mule from a miner, Luke Reilly. He sold the animal to Luis who intended to use it for plowing.

One day Joaquin borrowed the mule from Luis. He was plowing his own field when Reilly appeared with a rope, followed by several angry miners. There were sixteen in the lynching party, including the settlement physician, Dr. Charles Gates.

Joaquin did not deny that the mule might have originally belonged to Reilly. He explained that his elder brother had bought it in good faith from Hansen.

The mob moved on to Luis' cabin and seized him. Without giving him a chance to say a word in his own defense, they tied a flour sack over his head and a noose around his neck. They threw the rope over a tree branch and hauled him up to dangle and strangle to death. After that they stripped the clothes from Joaquin's body and beat him with axe handles and clubs.

During the night, Joaquin and Rosita cut down Luis' corpse and burned it. They burned his cabin and their own to the ground so that no one could occupy either. With a few belongings they walked several miles before daylight, when they took refuge in a small cave. It was there that Murietta swore he would avenge his brother's death.

Two days later he stalked Luke Reilly and caught him alone on his claim. He cut the miner's throat from ear to ear and slashed his face into unrecognizable ribbons of flesh.

On the following day he ambushed Dr. Gates, killed him with a bullet through the heart and mutilated his face also.

Now Rosita became alarmed and pleaded with Murietta to move on before aroused miners tracked them to the cave. He stubbornly refused.

"My brother cries from his grave for vengeance," he said grimly. "He had sixteen murderers. I have fourteen left to take to account."

He kept his vow. During the next three weeks he killed the other fourteen who had been in the lynching mob by bullets from ambush, by creeping up and plunging his knife

into their unguarded backs, by garroting them when they were asleep in their tents.

Within a month he had made "Joaquin Murietta" the most terrifying name in California north of Sacramento.

After avenging his brother's murder, he stole two horses and headed towards Oroville with Rosita. One evening when they had made camp, several Mexican horse rustlers descended upon them, led by Manuel Garcia, alias "Three-Fingered Jack." Others in the band were Claudio Cabron, Luis Vulvia, Pedro Gonzales and, by an incredible coincidence, Rosita's younger brother, Reyes Feliz, who had fled from Sonora after fatally shooting the son of another rancher in a quarrel over a girl.

Three-Fingered Jack had intended to steal the two horses. When he learned Murietta's identity, however, he not only changed his mind but invited the now-notorious killer to join his band. As for Rosita, she and her brother were both overjoyed at their reunion, and she expressed a wish to remain with the band, masquerading as a man. And so, both of them joined it.

Murietta was willing, at first, to serve as lieutenant to Three-Fingered Jack. The band did considerable rustling in the Marysville-Oroville-Paradise areas, rounding up as many as two or three hundred head, which they drove into Mexico and sold.

Murietta soon demonstrated his leadership. He pointed out to Three-Fingered Jack that while rustling on a large scale was admittedly profitable, it not only was time-consuming but also insignificant compared to the numerous opportunities to rob miners and hold up stagecoaches.

By way of illustration Murietta, with Three-Fingered Jack acting more as interested spectator than active participant, held up a San Francisco-bound Concord a few miles south of Paradise on the Feather River.

As the driver, George Croft, slowed his horses to a walk for a steep hill, Murietta emerged from behind a pile of towering rocks. He halted the driver with two revolvers and a command:

"Throw down the strongbox!"

Croft obeyed. When the heavy, ironbound box hit the

ground, Murietta cold-bloodedly shot him between the eyes, and he toppled from his seat.

Murietta ordered the passengers out of the coach. There were three of them, all returning miners.

He gestured to one of them with a revolver.

"Take the key from the driver's pocket and unlock the box."

The burly, bearded miner shook his head.

"He ain't got it. According to comp'ny rules he don't carry a key."

"Quel dolor!—it is sad," Murietta murmured and shot the miner dead.

The second one turned and ran. He took perhaps a dozen steps before a bullet blew the back of his head to pieces.

The third fell down on his knees and pleaded for his life. Murietta coolly put the muzzle of a revolver to his ear and pulled the trigger.

The casualness of these four murders made a profound impression on Three-Fingered Jack. He himself had a reputation as a sadistic killer. He was known to ambush lone prospectors, to cut the throats of Chinese laborers and to shoot horse wranglers out of the saddle before making off with the animals they guarded. In Murietta, however, he recognized a master and it wasn't long afterward that they switched roles, Murietta becoming the leader.

The Feather River Massacre not only marked the turning point in Murietta's career but set the pattern of his future activities. When he shot the lock off the strongbox and opened it, he saw some 250 pounds of gold nuggets—approximately $140,000. worth at today's value.

This, they agreed, was much too heavy to carry with them on the long ride back to camp. They buried it in the strongbox on the riverbank and took with them only the pokes in which the passengers carried gold dust. Three-Fingered Jack also removed a massive gold watch and chain from the body of the bearded miner.

In the numerous stagecoach robberies perpetrated by Murietta and his band thereafter, they cached gold plunder near the scenes of the crimes, principally in Calaveras and

Shasta Counties. It is estimated that they buried between two and two-and-a-half million dollars worth of gold.

And all of these troves were large; they were just too heavy and bulky to carry conveniently away in saddlebags.

The loot of the earliest holdups was buried in the strongboxes, but then Murietta had to change his methods to meet the changes the stagecoach operators resorted to in their efforts to thwart him.

One of their innovations was to bolt the strongbox to the floor of the coach. To solve that problem, Murietta carried flour sacks in his saddlebags. Gold was removed from the bolted-down strongboxes, transferred to the flour sacks and buried in them. By now these sacks have rotted to pieces.

Their other attempt to frustrate him was to have the representative of the stagecoach company weigh the gold an individual miner intended shipping and then to have him issue receipts. All of the gold was then melted together, usually in the form of a ball, which sometimes weighed as much as six or seven hundred pounds.

In theory this was much too heavy for Murietta and his men to steal from a stagecoach, but Murietta was a realist, not a theorist. By the autumn of 1851 both he and Three-Fingered Jack carried axes on their holdup trips. If the gold was being transported in a single ball, they were able to break it into large, portable chunks.

In the 1900s at least four of these man-made "nuggets" were dug up in various areas of Calaveras and Shasta Counties. The largest, found near Hazel Creek in 1919 by Dan Lamar, a ranch hand who was digging post holes for fencing, weighed approximately sixty pounds.

By late 1851 Murietta's band numbered more than seventy men. Many of them were Mexican bandits and rustlers who had either been lone badmen before or had drifted northward deliberately to join him. Some among them were native Americans, both outlaws and former miners who had decided that taking gold from others was easier than trying to find it in the ground or in streams.

All of them were ruthless killers, handpicked by Murietta for recklessness, loyalty and expertness with gun and knife. He turned away hundreds who made their way to the cabin he had built for Rosita and himself in Arroyo Can-

toova in the foothills of the Coastal Range. His boast that he could raise his own "army" of at least 2,000 men within a month if he so wished was based on fact.

Murietta did not personally participate in the hundreds of individual robberies and scores of stagecoach robberies attributed to him. It would have been impossible for him to have been in so many places at one time. Many of these robberies were the work of segments of his band led by Claudio Cabron or Luis Vulvia, Pedro Gonzales or Reyes Feliz.

Murietta's spies in many mining camps and settlements kept him informed of large gold shipments and he held up the stagecoaches that he knew would be transporting them. On these forays he usually was accompanied by Three-Fingered Jack and four or five of his men.

Among the many stagecoach robberies he perpetrated and gold plunder he buried, principally in 1851-1852, the following are the best authenticated. As far as can be ascertained, none of the caches has ever been dug up:

Between Susanville and Freedonyer Pass, near the present Route 36: about $200,000.

Between Burney and Hatchet Mountain Pass, not far from the present U.S. 299: about $175,000.

Between Oroville and Chico, adjacent to the present U.S.99E: $85,000., $125,000., $80,000., $175,000.

Between Chico and Paradise on the banks of the Big Butte River: $35,000., $90,000., $250,000.

The Downieville area near the present Route 49: $125,00., $75,000.

In addition it is estimated that he buried between $500,000. and one million dollars in a number of caches in San Diego County in order to have a fortune closer to the Mexican border, if he had to leave California. While this is not authenticated, from time to time in that area a treasure hunter has dug up a hoard.

Edward Aronow, a vacationing El Paso college student, found $53,000. in gold nuggets in the Carrizo Hills area of San Diego County in the summer of 1946. The nuggets were in three caches grouped close together. Apparently they had been buried in sacks which had rotted completely in the ground.

It is believed that many similar Murietta hoards remain

to be found in the Carrizo Hills and in the vicinity of the San Luis Rey Mission, a favorite site for treasure hunters.

Lawmen, sheriffs' posses and vigilante committees were gunning for Murietta in increasing numbers. Following seven brutal murders he committed in less than two weeks in November, 1851, the price on his head—dead or alive—was raised to $5,000.

Several tried to win it in shoot-outs when they chanced to encounter the bandit leader. On one occasion five vigilantes headed by a miner caught up with Murietta on the road near Downieville. The miner, Bothwell, fired first with a shotgun and missed. Then Murietta's guns began blazing, and he killed all five.

On another occasion, following a stagecoach holdup near Hangtown, he shot it out with three possemen and gunned down all of them.

Shortly after that he out-gunned a deputy sheriff, Ben Wilson, reputed to be fast on the draw.

Murietta and his band were proving to be too formidable for either a posse or a vigilante committee. Major General Joshua H. Bean, commanding the militia of California which had been admitted to statehood two years before was assigned the task of raising a special company to track down and exterminate them.

Bean raised his company and hunted for Murietta. He did not find him. When Murietta learned that Bean was encamped with some of his soldiers not far from the San Gabriel Mission, he waited for his opportunity.

It came two evenings later. The general was riding alone near camp. Murietta jumped up on the horse from the rear, stabbed Bean in the back, dragged him from the saddle and cut the dying man's throat.

Although several members of his band were caught or killed in the months thereafter, among them Rosita's brother Reyes, who was captured and speedily hanged, Murietta continued his own murderous career unchecked.

In May, 1853, faced with the State Militia's long-demonstrated inability to cope with him, Governor John Bigler tried something else. This time he appointed as a captain a lean, gun-slinging ex-cowpuncher, Harry Love. And he gave Love the authority to recruit twenty more like himself to form into a ranger company.

Within a month Captain Love organized his rangers. He discovered that Murietta and his entire band were at the Arroyo Cantoova hideout. They had gathered more than 1300 stolen horses which Cabron, Vulvia and Gonzales were to take to Mexico with a score of the men as herders.

Captain Love was a courageous man but not a foolish one. Instead of trying to slug it out with the entire band, he decided to wait until some of them departed on the horse drive.

On July 17, 1853, not one but two large parties of the bandits left Arroyo Cantoova. One headed towards Mexico with the stolen horses; the other made for an unknown destination in the Salinas Valley.

Captain Love made a cautious reconnaissance and found that only Murietta, Three-Fingered Jack and six others remained in camp.

The rangers attacked shortly after the next dawn. Four of the band were astir and were promptly gunned down. The two other henchmen were shot to death before they were well awake.

Suddenly Murietta and Three-Fingered Jack dashed out of the cabin. Neither was armed. They jumped on unsaddled horses, taking off at a gallop in opposite directions, bullets whistling around them.

It looked as if they would both escape. Then Captain Love, who was leading the chase after Murietta, brought down Murietta's horse with a bullet in the leg. The bandit chief leaped from the back of his horse as it fell. He began to run, but he was hit by a hail of bullets that toppled him over. He died minutes later.

The three rangers chasing Three-Fingered Jack caught up with him. He plunged from his horse, his body riddled with slugs.

Captain Love grimly surveyed the corpses.

"Damned if we'll carry them all the way to Sacramento."

He cut off Murietta's head and the hand of Three-Fingered Jack—the one which had two digits missing and was responsible for his alias.

He dropped them in a sack which he tied to his saddle. In Sacramento he showed the grisly relics to Governor Bigler and the State Legislature as proof that the bandit

leader and his chief lieutenant were actually dead.

Captain Love received a $2,000. bonus for his service in ridding the state of California of Joaquin Murietta, most terrifying of all western bandetti.

How it came about remains a mystery, but both the head of the bandit chief and the hand of Three-Fingered Jack later fell into the possession of a traveling showman, an erstwhile saloonkeeper named King. He was followed by other individuals who exhibited the relics for years thereafter, before these items finally disappeared.

As for Murietta's hoards of gold, most of them are still undoubtedly intact where he buried them during his rampage of murder and robbery.

He was inclined to be both hurried and careless about where he secreted his loot. In fact, some veteran treasure hunters say that if you close your eyes and stick a pin almost anywhere in a map of Calaveras or Shasta County, it could be a lucky place to start hunting.

CHAPTER 2

Patty Cannon's Murder Tavern

It was a curious little real estate article indeed that appeared in the September 17, 1967, issue of *The New York Times* under a Reliance, Maryland, dateline:

"The two-story house built here about 1890 on a site where Patty Cannon, a woman tavernkeeper, is said to have kidnapped and murdered slaves in the early nineteenth century was sold at auction today for $6,000.

"Legends of the notorious tavernkeeper are still whispered under the silver swamp maples of small Eastern Shore communities, and the two-acre site on the main road between Federalsburg, Md., and Seaford, Del., has been a tourist attraction for generations . . ."

On a June evening in 1819 a prosperous Rappahannock, Virginia, planter, Edwin Ravenal, arrived at Cannon's Tavern, a two-story inn beside the crossroads near the Nanticoke River. In his saddlebags was a sack of coins, some $10,000. worth of eagles,, shining ten-dollar gold pieces.

Ravenal had heard that the owner of the inn, a buxom, black-eyed gypsy who had come from Canada to settle on the Eastern Shore, dealt in slaves at bargain prices as well as purveying food, liquor and lodging. He was in the market for a number of sturdy Negroes to work on his expanding plantation.

Ravenal's horse was stabled by Patty Cannon's husband, Jessie, a morose, lantern-jawed individual, who did the chores.

The bartender, Joe Johnson, was Patty's son-in-law, and a muscular, scheming young thug.

Both were completely dominated by Patty, who not only was attractive in face and figure but, according to old legal records unearthed by the *Times* correspondent in Dorchester and Sussex Counties, was also a female of enormous strength and murderous disposition who "could lift 300-pound sacks of grain with ease."

"Negroes escaping from the South often came through Dorchester County, and it was said that Patty Cannon captured them by throwing them to the ground. She tied them with ropes she kept hidden under her voluminous skirts and then shackled her victims in the attic keep.

" . . . There were five fireplaces in the tavern into which the woman, according to legend, used to throw Negro children who annoyed her with their crying."

To Joe Johnson Ravenal stated the purpose of his visit. He was told that only Johnson's mother-in-law set a price upon the slaves, and that she had gone to town for the day but was expected back shortly. In the meanwhile, Johnson suggested, perhaps the visitor would like to try some excellent West Indies rum recently arrived in Norfolk.

The traveler made himself comfortable at a table and had a tot of rum. Later, Johnson brought him a second drink, and later still another.

At this point Johnson mentioned that he had an errand to do outside which would take but a few minutes. Leaving the unsuspecting Ravenal alone in the tavern, Johnson went out to meet Patty Cannon who was lurking in the darkness with a musket. In the nearby stable her husband was harnessing a horse to a cart.

Patty handed the musket to Johnson. He crept silently to the open window, rested the muzzle on the ledge and took careful aim at his victim's back. The musket roared, and a heavy slug tore a good-sized hole through Ravenal's body, killing him almost instantly.

Patty Cannon and her son-in-law went inside the tavern and carried out the corpse, which they dumped into the waiting cart. Her husband then drove the cart across the Delaware line and pushed the body out into the roadside scrub, where it was found late the next day.

According to the official report of the Delaware authorities "the deceased Edwin Ravenal of Rappahannock, Virginia, was foully murdered by highwaymen who made

off with his personal possessions and his horse."

It was the first of numerous similar reports during the next decade, for Patty Cannon, her husband Jesse and her son-in-law, functioned as an efficient murder team.

Slave dealers, planters and other prospective buyers of her human merchandise who visited the isolated tavern were all killed in the same way, and in the course of the following ten years more than thirty-five bodies were found on the Delaware side of the state line.

Patty Cannon buried the loot, most of it in gold coin, which she took from the bodies of the victims and from their saddlebags. Jesse sold their horses, usually waiting until he collected a small string. Then he would travel South to Richmond or Petersburg, where he was known as an itinerant horse dealer!

The operation had been progressing smoothly for a number of years and, according to various estimates, Patty Cannon had buried between $75,000. and $100,000. in several caches on the grounds, when something totally unexpected happened. She fell in love at first sight with a prospective victim.

His name was Harris; he was a strapping black-haired slave dealer from somewhere down the Nanticoke; and he was many years her junior.

The usual preparations had been made for a quick demise, and Jesse had hitched the horse to the death cart. When Joe Johnson joined her in the darkness outside of the tavern, however, she suddenly decided not to give him the musket.

"No," she said. "He has come to buy slaves, and slaves I will sell to him."

Joe stared at her in surprise. "Sell? We will trade his gold for a bullet, as we always do."

Without another word Patty Cannon walked into the nn. She could be hospitable and charming when it suited ner purpose, and it was evident that Harris suited her purpose.

They made a deal. She agreed to sell him eight strong slaves for a total price of $7,600. He paid $3,800. for four husky Negroes he selected there and then, and he left, walking with them to the Nanticoke where he had moored his skiff.

Four were as many as he could handle when traveling through the darkness. He planned to chain them in the cabin of his skiff and return the next evening for the remaining four.

That night Jesse was absent from the tavern, nor was he around on the following day. This caused Patty Cannon no concern, for she paid little attention to the comings and goings of her husband. Beside, she had someone else on her mind—Harris. She was looking forward to his arrival that evening and probably had some interesting ideas about how to entertain him.

Harris failed to show up. Late that night a rider dismounted at the stable.

Patty Cannon sent Joe Johnson out to find out who it was, and he returned with disquieting news.

"It's Jesse. He had a pistol in his saddle, and I saw him hide a gold sack in the manger. 'Pears to me he followed after Harris last night and done him in before he reached the Nanticoke."

Patty Cannon angrily confronted her husband. He admitted killing Harris, and he surrendered the sack, which contained $5,300. in gold.

On the next morning Patty Cannon appeared to be in a forgiving mood. She cooked her husband a hearty breakfast.

"Tis done," she said. "After all, we have his money, and there is no cause for us to quarrel."

Jesse sat down and began to eat his breakfast. He was in the midst of it when he suddenly stopped and fell to the floor. He threshed about in violent convulsions and died soon afterward.

"You poisoned him!" her shocked son-in-law exclaimed.

"Make certain that your tongue does not wag lest the same thing happen to you," Patty Cannon warned him.

But she and Joe Johnson had overlooked something very important—the four slaves. Her late husband had been so intent on killing and robbing Harris that he had carelessly permitted them to escape.

Delaware officers found them wandering on the Federalsburg-Seaford road, shackled together in pairs. After some questioning the lawmen learned that these four

had been among a number kept chained in the attic of the Cannon tavern. They told him also that they had been bought by a slave dealer who had been overtaken on the highway and shot to death by a man named Jesse who fed them daily in the attic.

Patty Cannon and her son-in-law were getting ready to carry Jesse's body out to the death cart when the officers arrived at the tavern.

According to Patty Cannon's glib tongue, her husband had accidentally eaten some rat poisoning with lamentable results. With the help of her son-in-law she was preparing to give poor Jesse "a proper Christian burial." She denied that Harris had visited the tavern, denied having ever murdered any patron, denied that there were any slaves chained in the attic.

They didn't believe her and prepared to search the attic.

At this point Joe Johnson broke down. He turned on his mother-in-law and accused her both of numerous slave kidnappings and of murder after murder, ending with the poisoning of her own husband.

When the officers opened the trapdoor leading to the attic they found seven Negroes: five men and two women, confined by leg irons, wrist cuffs and chains under the low, sloping roof. All of them were terrified, and it was some time before they could be persuaded to tell their stories all of which were similar.

They, as well as others who preceded them, had escaped from plantations in the Carolinas and were fleeing northward when seized and imprisoned by the "powerfully strong" Patty Cannon and Joe Johnson. Of the two women, one had been captured with her young child; the other had had two of her children with her.

The three youngsters had been taken away from them. Later, sifting through the piles of ashes remaining in the tavern's five huge fireplaces, the officers found the blackened skulls and charred bones of several small children.

Patty Cannon and her son-in-law were taken to Georgetown, Delaware, jailed and charged with kidnapping and murder. She evidently had hidden on her person the same kind of lethal potion she had administered to Jesse, for in

April, 1829, shortly before she was to be brought to trial, she committed suicide by poisoning. As for Joe Johnson, he was hanged.

For many years thereafter the "murder inn" was avoided by the more timorous residents of the surrounding area. There were ghostly legends about the "haunts" of Patty Cannon, Jesse and Joe Johnson returning nightly to the scene of their many homicides, of the spectral screams of Negro children and the creaking wheels of the death cart. The inn was torn down and replaced by another structure in 1890.

Years later, a cache of $3,200. in gold eagles, minted in 1804, was unearthed in the area by a farmer named Driscoll. A second cache of $4,455. was dug up by a Nanticoke fisherman, Ned Winter. In addition to gold eagles of the same date, it included several 1808 quarter eagles.

As often is the case, the numismatic value of these old coins has increased to far more than their original worth. Today, for example, an 1804 gold eagle is quoted at $275. by coin dealers and the rarer 1808 quarter eagle at $1,050.

Storekeeper Smith owned the building and the surrounding two-acre site until his death in May, 1967. His daughter-in-law, Mrs. Harold Smith, of Aberdeen, Maryland, purchased the property for $6,000. at an auction held the following September.

How many caches did the murderous Patty Cannon bury in the ground within the two-acre site and in the area just beyond the boundaries of the property? It is impossible to say, of course. And, although the total face value of her hoards has been estimated as high as $100,000. (only $7,655. of which has been thus far unearthed), the actual numismatic worth of the rare gold coins if and when they are found, will be far far more.

CHAPTER 3

Steinheimer's "Brass Spike" Millions

What is the value of ten mule-loads of pure gold ingots today?

Whoever finds the old live oak tree marked by a brass spike a few miles south of the town of Temple in central Texas probably will be able to give the answer and will become a millionaire as well.

The treasure has remained undisturbed since 1842, when an adventurous German, Karl Steinheimer, buried it at the base of a live oak where the Leon and Lampasas rivers merge to become the Little River, near what is now U.S. 81.

Born in Speyer, Germany, in 1793, Steinheimer was a sturdy, intelligent youngster with little liking either for school or for his father's prosperous farm. About the only thing he did care about in Speyer was a blue-eyed blonde schoolmate, Irma Schmidt, who lived with her parents on a nearby farm.

At the age of eleven, Steinheimer decided to run away from home and become a cabin boy. Before he went to sea, he exacted a promise from Irma to marry him when he grew up and made his fortune.

In the course of the next several years he voyaged to Africa, the United States, Mexico and many other countries around the globe. He became a sea captain. He learned to speak ten languages fluently. But he did not make a fortune.

From time to time between voyages Steinheimer would return to Speyer and see Irma.

"One of these times when I come back I'll be worth a lot of money," he kept promising. "Then we shall be married."

On one of his voyages across the Atlantic he visited

Galveston, Texas, where he became interested in raising cattle. This, he decided, was a much quicker way to make a fortune than remaining a sea captain, and he bought a small ranch.

He was meeting with moderate success when he chanced to encounter an old acquaintance of his seafaring days, Louis Aury—slave runner, privateer, suspected smuggler and, before Jean Lafitte, the ruler of Galveston Island.

Aury offered Steinheimer a proposition. The slave trade was booming, and enormous profits were to be made.

"I'll bring the blacks to Galvez-town Island," he explained. "You're a businessman and can get higher prices for them than I can. You take care of the selling."

Steinheimer agreed. Although Aury was hot-tempered and quarrelsome, they worked as partners for almost five years, and both of them made fortunes.

One day, the inevitable happened. There was a knock-down-dragout fight about something or other, and so they divided their profits and went their separate ways.

As a youth in Speyer, Steinheimer had often heard that the mountains of Mexico were full of gold and had read stories about the quests of Spanish explorers. In 1817 he heard reports of fabulously rich strikes in the Sierra Madres. He decided to seek gold there instead of returning to ranching.

Astonishingly, he found that the reports were true. He discovered a rich lode, then a second and a third!

He employed Mexican peons and Yaqui Indians to dig for him, and in the course of the next ten years Steinheimer acquired a greater fortune than he had ever dreamed of. He built himself a magnificent hacienda high in the mountains and ruled his hundreds of employees and their families as though he were their King.

There were times when he thought about his childhood sweetheart, Irma Schmidt, times when he had the urge to re-visit Speyer and marry her. But his many activities required more and more of his attention, and he kept putting off a journey to his homeland.

In 1827 he heard that a Texan named Hayden Edwards, with a small force, had revolted against Mexico and established a new and shaky little nation, the "Republic of Fredonia."

Edwards was sorely in need of money, arms and ammunition and additional troops. This inspired Steinheimer with an imaginative and romantic idea. He would offer Edwards a deal. In return for his financial backing and several hundred "soldiers" recruited from his own employees, Edwards would make him king of Fredonia and Irma would be his queen. He would place a diamond crown upon her blonde head as a magnificent wedding gift.

Steinheimer started off to make this dream a reality. When he reached Monterrey, he learned that the Mexican Government had crushed the revolt and that there no longer was a "Republic of Fredonia."

Disappointed, he returned to his hacienda in the Sierra Madres. For another decade he continued to work his mines and to accumulate more gold.

Sometime in 1837 he finally wrote to Irma Schmidt and asked her to come to Mexico. He would meet her in Monterrey and they would be married. It did not occur to the confident Steinheimer that even though she had not seen or heard from him in a quarter of a century she might have become tired of waiting and married someone else.

Almost three months went by, and then Steinheimer received a letter from one of Irma's cousins in Speyer. It informed him that although Irma was still single, she had emigrated to St. Louis, Missouri, three years before, where she had purchased a boarding house.

Steinheimer was elated and made new plans. He had more than enough gold to live the rest of his life in ease and luxury. He would journey to St. Louis with his fortune, marry his childhood sweetheart and settle down in Missouri.

He prepared for the trip with two trusted aides he had employed for a number of years, Roberto Gavín and Eduardo Rodriguez. Both were without family ties and eager to throw in their lot with him in the United States.

The trio set out for the Rio Grande with a train of fifteen pack mules. Ten of the animals were heavily loaded with gold ingots. The other five carried supplies. And in addition to their own horses, each of the three men had a remount.

They had traveled as far as Matamoros where Steinheimer met a Mexican army officer, Captain Manuel

Flores, a sort of prototype of the modern secret agent. Flores had been assigned with eight men to slip into Texas and, by bribery and any other means, to instigate Indian chieftains to rise against the government.

Flores agreed to let Steinheimer and his two aides join his own party for protection against hostile Apaches and Comanches in the hazardous Indian country south of San Antonio. Flores was evidently an honorable officer who was dedicated to his mission, for neither he nor his men attempted to steal the treasure. However, whether or not Steinheimer told him of the millions in gold he was transporting on the ten pack mules is not known.

The trip was uneventful as far as the Colorado River. At Marble Falls, several miles west and a little to the north of Austin, they encountered a gang of belligerent Texans and a gun fight resulted.

While Captain Flores and his men fought with the Texans, Steinheimer, Gavín and Rodriguez prudently withdrew with their packtrain and headed northeastward through the mesquite.

Fifty miles farther on, they sighted a band of men in the distance. Taking no chances, Steinheimer and Rodriguez drove the packtrain into concealment in the brush.

Gavín went ahead to scout, and there was a grim look on his face when he returned.

"Comanches, patrón," he said. "I counted more than thirty of them. This is not good."

"We'll hide right here until darkness," Steinheimer decided. "Then we'll go on until we find a spot to hide the ingots. We'll travel light and return later with more men to protect us from hostiles."

At nightfall they continued their journey. Before daybreak they came to a place which Steinheimer was satisfied would be recognizable when he returned. He later described it as a site "where two streams (the Leon and the Lampasas) combine into one (the Little River)."

Here the gold ingots were buried near the base of a tall live oak. To identify the tree, Steinheimer hammered into the trunk, five feet above the ground, a large brass spike "of the type used in the building of boats." How he happened to have a spike of this kind in his supplies is a minor

nystery, but it remains an important clue in pinpointing his ache.

Shortly after sunrise they abandoned the ten pack mules nd resumed their journey, now traveling much faster than efore. As Steinheimer himself related it:

"We rode, I should judge, between twelve and fourteen niles further. We came to a number of knobs on a prairie. Some of them were many feet in height. Dismounting and limbing to the top of one I could see a valley skirted with rees several miles to the west."

They resumed their journey, and less than a mile further hey rode into an ambush of Comanches.

Gavín and Rodriquez, who were riding in front, were uickly slain, literally pincushioned with arrows. Steinheimer's horse was killed beneath him. He jumped clear vhen the animal went down, and he was struck by an arrow vhich penetrated deeply into his right shoulder.

"I then picked up my gun and, despite my painful vound, retreated rapidly on foot," he later said. "For some eason the hostiles did not follow. They scalped my two companions and emptied the contents of our saddlebags.

"I made my way back to the knobs, climbed to the top of he central one and prepared to defend myself if I were gain attacked. When I observed the hostiles riding off in a outhern direction I came down from the knob and walked northward."

Steinheimer walked all night. He made several agonizing nd unsuccessful attempts to remove the arrow from his houlder. But the triangular tip had emerged from his back, nd when he tried to pull the shaft forward he only increased the torture.

The next day he kept on walking. He ran out of water. That night he slept in the mesquite, the arrowhead still protruding from his back.

On the afternoon of the second day he was found by a Temple rancher, Ben Scoy, who was searching for strays.

Scoy brought him to his ranch and summoned a physician, a Dr. Drake, who cut off the arrowhead and removed the shaft. By this time the wound was festering. Dr. Drake shook his head.

"I cannot save him," he told Scoy. "Gangrene has set in."

Steinheimer did not overhear him but suspected the worst.

"Do I have a gambler's chance?" he asked weakly.

The physician's reply was blunt: "Hardly. You're playing against a stacked deck."

"But I'm still in the game . . ."

Steinheimer asked Scoy for writing material. He drew a map showing the junction of the three rivers where he had buried his treasure. He indicated that the live oak with the brass spike in it was the one which was approximately "forty paces from the bank of a smaller stream" which might mean either the Lampasas or the Leon.

It is also pertinent to mention that it is not known whether or not the rivers were in flood at the time he buried the gold—which might make a difference in the "forty paces from the bank."

Then Steinheimer wrote a letter to Irma in St. Louis detailing what had happened. He told her that he had been on his way to marry her when he was wounded. He also told her to keep his letter secret for three months after she received it. By that time, if he were lucky enough to recover, he would be with her in St. Louis and they would be happily married. If not, he would be dead and buried, and the entire hoard of gold would be hers.

Steinheimer concluded by writing that neither Scoy nor the physician knew of the contents of the letter. He had told them that Irma Schmidt was the name of his married sister.

He enclosed the map in the letter and asked Scoy to mail it. The rancher did, without suspecting the contents.

Steinheimer had a great deal to live for and he fought doggedly. But Dr. Drake had warned him, the odds were heavily stacked against him, and he succumbed to his gangrenous wound soon afterwards.

The three months went by, and Steinheimer failed to meet Irma Schmidt in St. Louis. Whether or not she mourned is an unanswerable question. Having not seen him in a quarter of a century, her feelings, more likely, were no more than nostalgic.

Irma was still an attractive woman with several aging admirers. One of them was Gustave Freund, a brewmaster in his mid-fifties.

Irma showed the map to Freund, explained how she had btained it and offered him a half partnership if he were ccessful in discovering the cache. It was out of the ques- on for a woman to accompany a man on such a rigorous nd hazardous quest.

Freund was a methodical man, not one to plunge ahead n what might be a wild goose chase.

He did some inquiring and succeeded in tracing teinheimer's activities as a prosperous slave trader in Tex- ; and as a much wealthier gold mine operator in Mexico.

Convinced that the map was genuine and that it might be ne key that would unlock a vast fortune, Freund set out or Temple, Texas, with three men he had hired. One was a rmer wagon train boss, Andrew Tussick. The names of ne other two are not known.

In Temple they purchased supplies, including picks and novels. They then proceeded southward, found the ncture of the three rivers without difficulty, set up a camp earby and started to dig.

It wasn't long before ranchers and farmers in the area ecame curious. So did the residents of Temple.

Freund, at first, tried to conceal his objective, but after everal days of digging exploratory holes at the base of a umber of live oaks in the vicinity of the three rivers, it ecame obvious; the secret was out.

Although equipped with Steinheimer's own map, Freund id not find his treasure; for he could not discover the most nportant clue—the brass spike hammered deep into the unk of the old live oak at the approximate height of five eet.

Nor have more than a century of treasure hunters who ave been searching for the brass spike ever since.

This doesn't mean, though, that it isn't still in the tree unk where Karl Steinheimer embedded it. By now nature as undoubtedly hidden the head of the spike under the rowing bark.

Somewhere near the base of this elusive live oak lie Karl teinheimer's gold ingots. Ten mule-loads of them.

CHAPTER 4

"Snowshoe" Thompson's $200,000. Legacy

Yellowing in the files of the U.S. Post Office Department is an old petition signed by officials of the state of Nevada recommending payment of $6,000. to the incredible "Snowshoe" Thompson, who carried the mail over the Sierras between Placerville, California, and Carson City, Nevada, for more than twenty years.

On a homemade pair of skis, Thompson made his own trail, performing feats of superhuman strength and courage in blizzard, cold and snowdrift. Traveling ninety-one miles each way, he packed a hundred pounds of mail on his back in weather that stopped every other living thing.

His legacy, 420 pounds of gold nuggets, worth more than $200,000. today, remains where he hastily buried it in the vicinity of Stateline on the California-Nevada border.

It was in 1837 that young Thompson sailed around the Horn from Telemarken, Norway, to try his hand at farming in Illinois. He remained there for eleven years. Then he heard about the discovery of gold in California, and he decided to sell his farm and join the rush westward.

He traveled to Placerville to prospect. Many other gold seekers struck it rich, but luck always eluded him. Although he was industrious, brawny and persistent, he didn't find enough gold to pay for his food and so, when his savings were gone, he turned to doing odd jobs in the mining camps around Sutter Creek.

Thompson was working in Placerville for a successful prospector named Bill Bradwick, when the second winter set in, dropping an impassible wall of snow between this region of California and the roads eastward.

One January day he found Bradwick writing a letter to his wife back in Philadelphia. Thompson asked his boss

how long it would take for the letter to arrive there.

"With luck she'll get it in about three months," Bradwick told him. "It depends how it is carried from San Francisco, whether all around the Horn or across the Isthmus of Panama."

Thompson gazed towards the snowy Sierras. "Why can't you send your letter over the mountains to Carson City? It's only about ninety miles or so, and from there the stage runs east."

"No one could get over those mountains in winter."

"I could," said Thompson. "I'm going to make a pair of skis and try."

Bradwick didn't think he really meant it, but about a week later Thompson had made a pair of skis from tough oak boards and had carved himself a couple of strong poles.

"I'm going to take your letter to Carson City," he announced, as Bradwick eyed the homemade skis skeptically.

"On those funny-looking snowshoes?"

"They're not snowshoes," said Thompson. "They're skis like I used back home in Norway."

"Snowshoes!" Bradwick insisted. Like most folks in that region, he had never seen skis before.

But when he found that Thompson was determined to make the journey, he gave him an overcoat and a blanket. The news got around Placerville, and other miners decided they'd take a chance on sending letters east with the "crazy Swede, Snowshoe Thompson." One paid him with a knapsack in which to carry the mail; another gave him a revolver; the rest gave him flour and cured deer meat.

Thompson started out at dawn on a freezing day late in January. A small group of prospectors was on hand to bid him good-bye, and the gamblers among them offered to bet that he'd never make it to Carson City on his outlandish "snowshoes." There were no takers.

But he did make it, and only five days later he was back in Placerville, having gone the last twenty miles of the round trip in a heavy snowstorm.

He had delivered the mail to Carson City. There it would be put aboard the stage to St. Louis, then forwarded on eastward. It would arrive several weeks earlier than if sent by ship from San Francisco.

Lucas Heald, the local mail contractor, made Thompson a proposition. He would furnish Thompson with food and other supplies and, he promised, the government would pay him $25.00 monthly for his services, if Thompson would carry the mail regularly between Placerville and Carson City.

Thompson accepted. He packed a hundred pounds of mail on his sturdy back and started out for Carson City again. This time, because of the heavy load of mail, he left the revolver, blanket and overcoat behind, taking only a hunting knife and a minimum of food.

He slept on balsam boughs which he cut with the knife. He warmed himself at night by a small fire. He seemed to be impervious to cold and fatigue, and he arrived in Carson City on the third day.

All through that winter, and through the next nineteen, he carried mail back and forth between Placerville and Carson City, maintaining his rugged, self-imposed schedule. He tediously climbed the trail he himself had made through the mountains and he schussed swiftly down the further slopes. He wore out several pairs of the oaken skis, which he always made himself.

During this twenty years of service he saved the lives of a number of prospectors who had gotten themselves lost in the Sierras, because they had decided that if Thompson made regular trips on his "snowshoes," they could follow his trail either afoot or on horseback.

One of these was Jim Sisson, a fifty-eight-year-old miner who had made a strike and was ready to return East. He started from Placerville one February day in 1859, with two pack mules loaded with 420 pounds of gold nuggets, some food and his camp supplies.

Somewhere in the High Sierras, approaching Emerald Bay at the lower end of Lake Tahoe, Sisson lost the trail. During the night both his legs froze.

He was in pretty bad shape when Thompson found him three days later. Thompson built a pine branch lean-to for him and covered him with blankets.

"You need a doctor pretty quick," he told him. "I'll push on to Carson City and get Doc Deyton. We'll come back for you with a sled tomorrow."

"Don't leave me here alone," Sisson pleaded.

"You can't walk on those frozen legs," Thompson pointed out, "and those mules of yours won't carry an extra load."

"I'll ride," said Sisson. "Those nuggets packed on their backs ain't going to do me any good if I'm not alive to spend 'em. There's a pick and shovel in the packs. Bury the gold sacks right here and we'll ride the critters in to Carson City."

Thompson was willing to oblige. But when he tried to dig into the frozen ground under two feet of snow, he found it almost as hard as stone. He spent hours digging a shallow hole just large enough to contain the sacks. At Sisson's insistence he covered them with only a few inches of earth, just about enough to hide them from sight.

At daybreak he lifted Sisson to the back of one of the mules and mounted the other with his mail and his skis.

Thus they traveled to Carson City and the house of Dr. Deyton, who shook his head forebodingly when he had examined Sisson.

"Gangrene in both legs. I'll have to amputate 'em." The physician's face clouded. "Trouble is, I can't go ahead. He won't survive without chloroform. And there's none to be had in Carson City. Or in Reno either."

"Where can I get some, Doc?" Thompson asked.

"Sacramento should have a supply. But that's over 140 miles from here."

"I'll get it," said Thompson. "Just keep Sisson going till I get back. I'm going to pick up the mail, drop it off at Placerville and then go on to Sacramento to get you the chloroform."

Dr. Deyton stared at him. "You're crazy. No one can do it—especially in the dead of winter."

Thompson had already covered ninety-one miles. Now he was planning to ski another 280 miles—to Sacramento and back—without rest.

He set out for Placerville with his return load of mail, reached there two days later, turned the mail sack over to Lucas Heald and prepared to continue his journey.

"Where are you going?" Heald asked.

"Sacramento!"

"You can't do it. You need sleep!"

Thompson was so determined that Heald had to sum-

mon some prospectors to help him hold the brawny mailman forcibly. After this they reached a compromise. Heald would send a mounted messenger to Sacramento while Thompson caught up on his sleep. When the messenger returned, Thompson could carry the anesthetic on to Carson City.

Two days later the chloroform arrived in Placerville. Thompson carried it to Dr. Deyton, who amputated both of his patient's gangrened legs.

It was a long time before Sisson recovered, and when he did, he sent for Thompson.

"I owe my life to you," he said, "and I want to show my gratitude to you. I've arranged to sell my mules. With the money and the gold dust in my poke, I've got enough to pay Doc Deyton and the stage fare back home to Chicago, where I've got folks to take care of me. I want to give you the nuggets you buried back there on the mountain where you found me. I can't go back there to get them without my two legs, and the gold wouldn't be much use to me even if I did."

Thompson protested that he did not deserve a reward. He said that Sisson was not the first man he had brought down from the mountains nor, probably, the last. He felt it was just part of his job.

Sisson insisted. He did not put his bequest down on paper, pointing out there was no need, for Thompson was the only man beside himself who knew where the 420 pounds of gold were buried.

"One thing more you can do for me," he said. "You make those long snowshoes of yours and you have a knack for carving. Maybe you can make me a couple of peg legs so I can travel East."

Thompson made Sisson oak legs and crutches. Not long afterwards the crippled prospector boarded an eastbound stage and Thompson never saw or heard from him again.

Thompson never touched his gold legacy. As he once confided to Dr. Deyton, it was as safe up on the mountain as it was in the bank. Besides he didn't need it. Before long he would receive a lot of money from the government, which owed him all his back wages.

"You mean in all these years you've never been paid for

carrying the mail?" the physician asked in surprise and Thompson shook his head.

"Luke Heald keeps me in food, and I've got a shack to sleep in at both ends of my run. Some day the government will send me all my wages at once."

"Just the same I'd ask the mail contractor about it if I were you."

Thompson took Dr. Deyton's advice. He asked Heald about his back wages.

"I'll write a letter to Washington and find out what's been holding 'em up," Heald offered.

The letter was written in March of Thompson's twentieth year of service. It was put into the sack when he started off on his regular run to Carson City. The sun was shining brilliantly on the snowclad Sierras. Thompson became snowblind and fell over a precipice about twenty-nine miles short of his destination. With a broken arm he groped his way back to the familiar trail and made his way forward to Carson City.

Four months went by. When there was no answer to his letter Heald wrote another, this time to Nevada officials, asking that they do something about Thompson's claim. They responded with a petition to Postmaster General John A.J. Creswell. They pointed out Thompson's unflagging loyalty and dedication to his job, and they urged that he be paid the $6,000. which the Federal Government owed him.

More time went by. Then Thompson received a glowing letter of commendation signed by Postmaster General Creswell. No mention was made of any forthcoming payment.

Thompson's gratitude for the letter of praise was almost pathetic. He proudly showed it to Heald who became greatly angered.

"You can't cash that letter at the bank," he said. "The government owes you a lot of money, and it looks like there's only one way you'll be able to collect it. You'll have to go to Washington and see the Postmaster General."

Heald spoke to some of Placerville's prominent citizens. They decided to raise a fund to pay for his transportation to the East and back home again.

When he found out about it, Thompson stopped them. He was ready to go to Washington, he said, but only if he paid his own way. He had some money put aside.

It was then that he decided to dig up the legacy left by Jim Sisson—at least enough to pay for his trip East.

Early on a September morning he started out on foot towards Carson City over the trail he had blazed and traveled hundreds of times. He intended to dig up his cache, retrieve several nuggets, then go on to Carson City and take the stage.

He hiked along the familiar trail and began the climb towards 7,382 foot high Echo Summit. He appeared to be in the best of health as he headed down the far side, according to a resident of Stateline, Ed Bergner, who met him and exchanged a few words on the way.

He must have been very near his cache when he suddenly was seized by a heart attack and died on the trail. What brought it on will never be known. Perhaps his heart was weakened by a score of years of tremendous physical exertion, the like of which has been experienced by few human beings. Perhaps it was excitement, the anticipation of digging up some nuggets and traveling to Washington to see the Postmaster General.

Bergner found Thompson's body later in the day, as he was returning home to Stateline.

"Snowshoe" Thompson was buried in nearby Genoa on the Nevada side of the border. The local citizenry erected in his memory a headstone adorned with a pair of skis carved out of stone.

He left no map pinpointing his golden legacy. Its general location was subsequently disclosed by Dr. Deyton, and to this day it has not been found by the treasure hunters who have been inspired to seek for it by this story of the incredible postman.

CHAPTER 5

Loot of the "Treasure Express"

The most tempting challenge to holdup men operating in the thickly timbered canyons and abrupt passes of South Dakota's Black Hills in the gun-slinging days of the 1870s was the Wells, Fargo "Treasure Express" which periodically conveyed gold shipments of the Homestake Mining Company from Deadwood City, South Dakota, to Sidney, Nebraska.

For several years the "Treasure Express," also called "Old Ironsides" because of its bulletproof sheet metal reinforcements, defied every attempt to plunder it by such notorious road agents as Sam Bass, Joe "Kid" Webster, Lame Bradley and Big Nose Joe George.

The driver of this fortress on wheels was Big Gene Barnett, the best stagecoach driver in the Dakotas. His shotgun messenger was a courageous Wells, Fargo guard, Scott Davis, who had earned a formidable reputation through the years by thwarting several too-ambitious bandits with loads of buckshot. While trying to hold up the "Treasure Express" at least eight of these gentry had been fatally perforated by his scatter gun.

The stage customarily carried at least five guards in addition to Scott Davis. Two rode on the roof behind him. The others were inside with the stacked gold ingots, each of which was stamped with the name of Homestake and the code number of the shipment.

No passengers were permitted on the "Treasure Express." For reasons never made clear a rancher named Hugh Campbell *was* allowed to pay his fare and go along with the gold on September 28, 1878.

As it happened, on this particular morning the stage carried the biggest single shipment ever dispatched from the Homestake mine—$260,000. worth of shining gold ingots.

And it further happened, on this particular morning only

three guards were aboard. One was a young Missourian, Gail Hill, who sat on the box beside driver Barnett. The other two were Scott Davis, who rode inside the coach with a new guard, Bill Smith. The third occupant was the rancher-passenger, Hugh Campbell.

It was "a quirk of fate," editorialized the Deadwood City *Pioneer*, that on this particular run the stage was so lightly guarded. It was the run on which Jim Carey made the only successful holdup of the "Treasure Express."

Jim Carey was a fast man with a six-gun, and the leader of a gang of banditti which included such gun-slick killers as Al Speer, Doug Goodale—the black sheep son of John Goodale, president of the Atlantic, Iowa, bank—and Frank McBride.

He was also a cut above the usual Black Hills road agent: He was shrewd and he was a planner.

"We're not riding out to tackle "Old Ironsides," he explained to his boys. "Big Gene Barnett is going to drive her right smack into our hands."

So it was that on that September day the Carey gang rode towards the Canyon Springs relay station, where the horses which had been pulling the "Treasure Express" through the Black Hills would be exchanged for fresh ones. The outlaws halted in a stand of timber. Jim Carey rode on alone to the station—a corral, a shack and a stable in the charge of the Wells, Fargo tender, John Miner.

The stage was due any moment now. Miner was working on some harness gear for the horse-exchange. He wasn't at all suspicious when Carey rode up to him and asked for a drink of water.

"Help yourself. Bucket's right over there."

Carey dismounted. His six-gun came out swiftly. Miner looked up and found himself looking into the barrel.

"Head back there to the stable. Fast!"

The tender obeyed. Carey fired once into the air to signal his men to come on. They picketed the horses behind the stable and went inside with Miner.

The stage pulled up at the relay station less than a quarter of an hour later.

"Unhitch the horses!"

Barnett boomed his usual greeting from the box. He saw no sign of Miner.

"Must be sleeping," he said and came down from the box, followed by Gail Hill.

As they were approaching the shack, there was a spatter of gunfire from the direction of the stable. Hill wheeled, bringing up his shotgun. A bullet drilled him between the eyes and blew out the back of his head.

Barnett turned and ran for the nearest cover—the water trough by the corral.

Scott Davis opened the stagecoach door and fired toward the stable. There was a quick reply. A fusillade of bullets whined at him. One hit him in the left arm. Several went in through the open door. The passenger, Hugh Campbell, died where he was sitting, a bullet through his heart. Smith, the other guard, blinded by flying splinters, was fatally wounded.

Ignoring his wound, Davis sent buckshot blasts toward the stable and shouted to Barnett: "Get back there on the box. Drive the stage the hell out of here!"

Barnett did not lack courage. He hesitated, weighing his chances—the slim protection afforded by the corral post against what seemed certain death if he attempted to dash back to the stage.

One of the gunmen, Frank McBride, emerged from the stable, firing at Barnett. With his shotgun empty, Davis swiftly drew his pistol. McBride died with a bullet through his head.

Another man—unidentified—came out of the stable, his gun blazing. Davis dropped him in his tracks with a bullet through the stomach. Then he started to reload his shotgun.

He was still at it when Jim Carey suddenly appeared and darted towards the corral. He managed to get behind Barnett, put his gun to the back of Barnett's head and shouted to Davis: "Drop your scatter gun or I'll kill the driver!"

Davis dropped his shotgun to the ground.

"Okay. Now turn around and start walking!"

Davis obeyed. There was nothing else he could do. At each step he expected to feel the searing impact of a bullet in his back, but for some reason Carey spared his life.

Now he saw his wounded arm was bleeding profusely. He halted, bound it with a strip he tore from his shirt and

then resumed walking. He hiked for several miles before meeting anyone on the road. Finally he encountered four men he knew: William Ward, who was both superintendent of the stage line and a deputy U.S. Marshal, and Boone May, Jesse Brown and William Taylor. They had been at the next depot, awaiting the arrival of the "Treasure Express." When it failed to appear, they had backtracked to find out what had happened.

Approximately four hours elapsed between the time Davis started from the relay station and the time when he returned, accompanied by the four others. There was no sign of any of the Carey gang, either living or dead. They had not only taken with them the bodies of McBride and the unidentified bandit but also Miner and Barnett, presumably as captives.

Shotgun messenger Hill lay where he had fallen. The bodies of Campbell and of Smith, who had succumbed to his wound, had been tossed out of the stagecoach to facilitate the removal of the ingots.

Deputy U.S. Marshal Ward pointed to wagon tracks near the stagecoach.

" 'Pears that Jim Carey used a spring wagon to haul off the gold along with his two dead pals. He sure didn't miss a trick when he planned this robbery."

Scott Davis nodded agreement. "Either they headed north towards Rapid City or west through Wyoming. Carey wouldn't have made for Deadwood, and if he had traveled south towards Sidney you'd have met up with him on the road."

Ward was usually phlegmatic and slow to anger. Now he was in a cold rage at the clean getaway of the gang. He felt partly responsible because on this run the "Treasure Express" had not been manned by more guards. Now it was his duty, both as superintendent of the stage line and as a federal officer, to make every effort to recover the gold and to bring the gang to justice.

He decided to send Davis, who needed medical attention, to Casper, Wyoming, accompanied by his three men. He pointed out that it might take weeks, perhaps months, to track down Carey, and they'd be needed back in town.

"What happens when you catch up with the gang?"

asked Boone May. "You'll be taking on four or five of em."

"I'll manage." Ward shrugged his shoulders. "I've got a notion that after making a haul like this they'll soon separate. The one I want is Jim Carey. He's got a lot of other things to answer for throughout the territory besides these killings and the robbery of the stage."

So it was that Ward took up the pursuit alone. He found a ranch near Buffalo Gap where Jim Carey had bought a spring wagon and a team of horses before the robbery. Then he tracked the wagon to the Pierre Trail, which heads eastward towards the Badlands of South Dakota.

Beyond the Cheyenne River and the town of Red Shirt, he came to a camp of bullwhackers who told him that earlier in the day they had met a spring wagon heading east accompanied by four men on horseback.

"They were in an all-fired hurry," said one of the bullwhackers.

"Did you get a look at what was in the wagon?"

"Nope. It was covered by a tarpaulin."

Ward did not make camp that night. Convinced that the trail was getting hot, he rode all night.

On the following day, approximately two miles west of Table Mountain, which marks the extreme southwestern corner of what is now Badlands National Monument, he found the spring wagon—abandoned and empty. Nearby were two newly-dug graves heaped with stones.

He decided that the gang had buried the bodies of McBride and the unknown bandit and then gone their separate ways instead of taking the wagon on through the Badlands. The tracks left by their horses indicated this.

Studying the several sets of tracks, Ward had a difficult decision to make. Which set had been made by the horse ridden by Jim Carey, the man he wanted most?

After some deliberation Ward chose the tracks heading eastward through the Badlands. His reason, as he later explained, was that Carey was wanted for holdups in areas to the west, north and south, and that sheriffs' posses and bounty hunters, tempted by the rewards on his head, were searching for him in those places. Therefore it seemed logical that Carey would make his getaway towards the east.

Ward followed the tracks through the Badlands to the town of Big Foot Hill on what is now U.S. 90. Here he learned that a stranger with two unusually heavy saddlebags had passed through, three days before!

Encouraged, Ward continued his pursuit. He followed the stranger for weeks with dogged determination, riding right on through Nebraska and into Iowa.

It wasn't until he arrived in the town of Atlantic, some fifty-five miles east of Council Bluffs, that he finally admitted defeat and decided to abandon the chase.

Then an incredible thing occurred, one of those fantastic coincidences which are implausible in fiction, but that sometimes really happen. He was walking along the main street of Atlantic when he chanced to look into the store window of the Goodale Bank. There, on display, were two gold ingots. Plainly stamped on them were "Homestake Mining Company" and the same code number as that of the shipment stolen in the Canyon Springs holdup.

Ward went into the bank and questioned the president, John Goodale.

How did he come into possession of the ingots? John Goodale answered freely. He had nothing to hide.

He told Ward that his son, Douglas, had been working for the Homestake Mining Company in Deadwood and had decided to come home. Before leaving he had put his savings into the two gold bars.

"Doug figured that way he wouldn't be tempted to gamble away part of his savings on his way back home," Goodale explained. "After he arrived a couple of days ago I bought the bars from him and put them in the window on display. Attracting a lot of interest. Most folks don't get to see this much gold their entire lives."

"I can believe it," Ward said tersely.

The stranger whom he had been following for hundreds of miles wasn't Jim Carey but Doug Goodale.

Accompanied by Sheriff Tyding of Atlantic, Ward arrested Doug Goodale who surrendered without any show of resistance. On the contrary. They were surprised that a member of the desperate Carey gang would be both mild and cooperative.

He confessed that he had taken part in the holdup:

"After that we put the bodies of Frank McBride and

Pete Wall (the previously unidentified gun slinger) into the wagon with the gold bars and headed towards the Badlands with Jim Carey driving.

"We figured a posse would soon be after us so we kept on pushing along. In a few days the two corpses in the wagon began stinking bad. Jim didn't want to take time to bury them proper, and he wouldn't just dump them. He said that if we did and a posse found 'em, they'd be evidence we'd held up the stage."

"What about Miner and Barnett?" Ward asked.

"We let 'em go free on the other side of the Cheyenne after taking their boots to slow up their walking."

Miner and Barnett eventually did arrive in Red Shirt unharmed except for badly cut and bruised feet.

According to Doug Goodale, the gold ingots, with the exception of the two bars he had placed in his saddlebags, were buried where they abandoned the spring wagon, west of Table Mountain. It had been Jim Carey's idea to heap stones on the two graves to mark the site.

"Jim figured that anyone finding the stone piles would think they had been put there just to keep coyotes from digging up the bodies," Goodale explained.

Ward and his prisoner boarded a Union Pacific train for a journey to Cheyenne where the latter was to stand trial for participation in the holdup.

Doug Goodale was not handcuffed. His apparent meekness fooled Ward. The deputy U.S. Marshal also underestimated his own weariness after weeks in the saddle. Somewhere west of what is now Central City, Nebraska, he dozed. Doug Goodale jumped off the moving train and escaped.

When Ward awakened and discovered that his prisoner was missing, he stopped the train and had it go back all the way to Central City, but Doug Goodale was not found.

His disappearance was permanent. And so was Jim Carey's.

What happened to the other two surviving members of the gang? Al Speer chanced to meet Scott Davis in front of a Laramie saloon. The encounter was brief and deadly. Speer was swift on the draw, but Davis' shotgun was even faster.

The last holdup man, known as Fly-Specked Billy, was

caught by a posse near Spearfish, South Dakota, after stealing a horse. Unaware at the time that the rustler had been a member of the Carey gang, the posse lynched him on the nearest tree.

By due process of law the two gold ingots discovered by Ward in the window of the Goodale bank were restored to the Homestake Mining Company in Deadwood. Although he searched the area near the two graves west of Table Mountain, Ward failed to find the rest of the stolen loot.

A number of treasure hunters who learned of the approximate location also tried their luck—with equally fruitless results.

In July 1933, an Imlay, South Dakota, rancher, Terry O'Neill, was riding his horse westward on Route 40 looking for a strayed whiteface steer. He decided to camp for the night at the foot of Sheep Mountain, which is about a mile north of Table Mountain.

He was gathering wood for a cook fire when he saw something gleaming in the setting sun. It was a gold ingot, partly exposed by rain torrents which had coursed down the mountain slope for fifty-five years. Like the two Goodale bars, this one was stamped "Homestake Mining Company" and bore the code number of the shipment stolen at Canyon Springs.

O'Neill got a pick and shovel from his ranch and returned to dig. He probed the base of the slope for several days, but he did not find another ingot.

Had Doug Goodale deliberately lied in his confession? Had Jim Carey buried the loot at the foot of Sheep Mountain, not near the graves but about a mile to the north of them?

Or was it indeed cached near the graves? Then the most logical explanation is that Goodale started off with *three*, not *two*, ingots and, after riding a short distance, decided that his horse was carrying too much weight, whereupon he buried the third ingot.

The answer is a tossup, but one thing is certain. With the exception of three ingots, all of the loot of the Canyon Springs holdup is still buried somewhere within the area of that mile—approximately $240,000. worth of pure gold.

CHAPTER 6

Emperor Maximilian's Five Million Dollar Fortune

Somewhere in the vicinity of Castle Gap, Texas, approximately fifteen miles to the east of the winding Pecos River, a buried trove of gold and silver plate, bags of coin and chests of precious jewels, worth five million dollars or more, is waiting.

The personal fortune of Ferdinand Maximilian, ill-starred Emperor of Mexico, who was executed by a firing squad at Querétaro, Mexico, on June 19, 1867, has been an intriguing challenge to treasure hunters for a little more than a century.

It was collected during the Civil War at a time when our own country was too immersed in strife to be concerned that Napoleon III of France had placed a handpicked ruler upon the throne of Mexico. His selection was the Austrian archduke, Maximilian, thirty-two-year-old brother of Emperor Franz Joseph.

Maximilian was a vain, handsome member of the European aristocracy. Trained as a naval officer, he had been governor-general of the Lombardo-Venetian kingdom. He had displayed such poor qualities as a ruler and such great extravagances that he had been removed, "kicked upstairs" by Napoleon III.

In April, 1864, after renouncing his imperial rights to the throne of Austria, Maximilian accepted his new appointment. He arrived in Mexico City in June with his wife, Charlotte, or Carlotta as she is often known, a former Belgian princess, and a large European entourage including a number of aristocratic Austrian military aides.

Maximilian had inherited a sizable fortune from his father, Archduke Francis Charles. Historians do not concur as to the amount he took with him to Mexico, but they

do agree that he squandered most of it and recouped a greater fortune by plundering his adopted country, with the help of his 30,000 French troops.

In December, 1865, seven months after the end of the Civil War, the United States government demanded that Napoleon withdraw his troops from Mexican soil. The French emperor acceded, and, shortly after the prolonged evacuation commenced, the Mexican republican forces under their patriotic leader, Jauréz, started to reconquer their country.

In February, 1866, a full year before the last of the French troops sailed from Veracruz, Maximilian saw the writing on the wall and decided that the time had come to prepare for his own departure. He secretly summoned four loyal Austrian officers of his personal staff: Colonel Otto von Huber, former commandant of a cavalry squadron, Major Hans Stieglitz, Major Markus Mueller, and Captain Kurt Bosch.

He confided to them his apprehensions about the future. Without the restraining presence of French troops it would be only a matter of time before all Mexico would rise against him and join Jauréz.

The four Austrians listened in grave silence. Then the senior officer, Colonel von Huber, a stocky man of thirty-eight with a flourishing blond moustache, spoke up: "We are ready, as always, to serve Your Majesty."

Maximilian led them to the dungeons beneath the palace and along a dimly lit corridor to the extreme end. Here the iron bars of a cell had been replaced by a massive oak door. He unlocked the heavy iron lock and opened the door to a strong room.

Inside the room were five rows of large barrels, nine in a row. All of them were open. Each was approximately three-quarters filled with casks of jewels, gold and silver plate, sacks of gold pieces and silver coin. There were also a number of jeweled crucifixes, gold chalices and other religious treasures.

Maximilian gave instructions. His four trusted aides were to transport this great fortune more than twelve hundred miles to the United States where it would be safe. They would cross the border into Texas at Presidio del

Norte, now El Paso. From there they were to travel southeastward to San Antonio and deliver the precious freight to the mission of San Jose de Aguayo where he had arranged with other loyal friends to hide it, pending his further orders.

"You will observe that the barrels are not filled to the top," he pointed out. "Before they are closed and nailed, a layer of flour is to be added to each so they will not appear to be of great value if opened during your journey."

"This will not occur, Sire," Colonel von Huber assured him. "We will guard them with our lives by day and by night."

The aides busied themselves with final preparations. Major Steiglitz and Captain Bosch purchased fifteen teams of oxen and fifteen carretas—rugged two-wheeled Mexican carts that were most suitable for carrying heavy loads over rough terrain. Major Mueller hired fifteen peons to drive the carretas for what he told them would be "many miles and many days." He did not divulge the destination. He selected one Pedro Cardenas to be the head driver and lead the caravan.

Colonel von Huber personally chose the horses. With a cavalryman's eye for fine mounts, he requisitioned them from Maximilian's own stables.

They started out from Mexico City on the morning of February 24, 1866. There were nineteen men in all. The four mounted Austrian officers, led by the colonel, were well armed. Each of the carretas, besides carrying three barrels of treasure, also was loaded with food and bivouac supplies, casks of water and forage. In accordance with the emperor's orders a layer of flour had been placed in each treasure barrel. The entire contents of every carreta were concealed under a canvas cover.

Colonel von Huber had instructed his fellow officers to stick to one story if questioned about the purpose of their journey. They were carrying forty-five barrels of flour to deliver to "friends across the border."

The naiveté of this story for a man of von Huber's supposed sophistication is almost incredible. Each barrel was much too heavy to contain flour. In addition the four superbly mounted and well-dressed foreigners were ob-

viously *cabelleros,* far above the cut of ordinary oxen train bosses.

It is doubtful if Pedro Cardenas or even the most ignorant driver swallowed the story—especially after the first night out, when the *cabelleros,* in pairs, mounted guard over the carretas. Nevertheless the peons were well paid and therefore not inquisitive.

They drove the plodding ox teams northward day after day; past San Luis Potosi, Saltillo, Torreon, Hildalgo del Parral, Chihuahua and over the lofty mountains, across the cactus-tufted mesas and through arid desert wastelands. They averaged twenty miles daily, and the four officers were constantly on the alert against attack by one of Jauréz's "rebel" bands.

No attack or ambush developed. After a journey of sixty-one days they crossed the Texas border at Presidio del Norte late in April. Here they halted, congratulated one another on reaching the safety of the United States with their emperor's treasure unmolested and made camp on the bank of the Rio Grande.

"We'll rest the horses and oxen for a few days before going on to San Antonio," von Huber decided.

For three days they attracted no attention. On the fourth morning six disreputable-looking strangers who had been watering their jaded horses in the river rode into their camp.

The Austrians were at breakfast. Von Huber hospitably invited the strangers to join them.

"Don't mind if we do," said the rangy, lantern-jawed individual who appeared to be the leader. "Came a long way and have a long way to go. We-all are powerful hungry, suh."

They wolfed their food. Von Huber asked them where they had come from and where they were going. Tom Knight, the leader, appraised the colonel with sharp blue eyes.

"Mistuh, you must be a stranger to these parts. A man could get himself into a heap of trouble asking questions like that. But we ain't the troublesome kind. All we're aimin' to do is get shut riddance of the dammyankee carpetbaggers that are flocking into Missouri. We're former Confederate sojers lightin' out for Mexico."

Von Huber asked if they had traveled by way of San Antonio. Knight nodded grimly.

"Worse than back home in Missouri, suh. Between here and San Antone you'll find rampagin' Comanches, Apaches, Shawnees and other hostiles, not to mention bands of rustlers and road agents."

This was disquieting news to the Austrians, who had fancied that now the caravan was much safer than it had been in Mexico. Knight sounded sincere.

Von Huber was a man of quick and sometimes misguided decisions. He offered the six ex-Confederate soldiers a proposition. If they would escort the caravan safely to San Antonio he would pay them each one hundred dollars in gold on their arrival.

"That's a heap of money, suh," said Knight. "What you toting in all those carts?"

"Flour," Von Huber answered. "It is important that it be delivered as soon as possible."

Knight stared skeptically at the canvas-covered carretas. He shrewdly made no comment. He told the colonel they certainly could use the money and that for $600. in gold they would delay their own journey, retrace their route as far as San Antonio and make sure the caravan was not attacked.

That night the ex-Confederates camped by themselves a little apart from the others. They watched Stieglitz and Bosch mount guard over the carretas.

"Sure as hell they're toting something a lot more valuable than flour in those carts," Knight commented and his pals agreed.

One of them, Henry Stewart, a burly character with beetling eyebrows, was all for finding out that very night what was in the carretas. Knight told him to be patient.

"Lots of distance between here and San Antone. We'll wait for the right time to have ourselves a look-see. And maybe more."

Reinforced by the armed escort, the caravan resumed its journey and for the next few days everything went smoothly. Either Knight had been lying about roving hostiles and predatory road agents, or the sight of ten armed guards kept them at a distance.

One night when the caravan was camped on the bank of

the Pecos River and von Huber and Mueller were on sentry duty, they were approached by Knight and one of his men, Will Hart.

"Hart here was huntin' for some jack rabbits for our cookpot," said Knight. "He thinks he spotted a band of Apaches short distance downstream. We'd like you to come look, suh. Best take the major along. An extra pair of eyes can help. An Apache can hide behind a blade of grass."

The colonel was in a quandary. He couldn't think of an excuse for refusing. It would be hard to explain why he and Mueller would insist on guarding barrels of flour so vigilantly when the lives of all of them might be endangered by hostiles.

The four men started walking along the bank of the river and as soon as they were out of sight, another ex-Confederate, Paul Naughton, approached the nearest carreta, unsheathing his bowie knife.

It took but a few minutes for him to push back a corner of the canvas cover and pry open one of the barrel tops. His exploring hand dug deep into the flour. It felt a bag of coin. And another. It was all he needed to know. Quickly closing the barrel top, he replaced the canvas cover and scurried back to his bivouac.

Knight returned with Hart a short while later. The ruse had been successful. The foreigners had not become suspicious.

Naughton reported his discovery. "I tried to heft the other two barrels and could scarce move 'em," he added. "Must be chockful of hard money too. Know what I'm athinkin'?"

Knight chuckled evilly. "Same thing I've been thinkin' since we met up with this outfit. Every one of them carts yonder is loaded with barrels of hard money!"

For a moment there was silence. Grouped about their campfire Knight and the others contemplated the carretas drawn up in a circle a short distance away. Untold wealth was waiting for them under those canvas covers. Cupidity shone from their eyes; greed crept across their hard faces.

Henry Stewart, the impatient one, drew his six-gun. "What we awaitin' for? Let's pistol them right now!"

"No!" Knight snapped. "There are nineteen of them and we got to do this right so not one Mex escapes to tell about it later. We'll make us a plan."

Plan they did and on the following night, at the suggestion of Knight, von Huber ordered a halt at Castle Gap, fifteen miles east of the Horsehead Crossing of the Pecos River. Here the road to San Antonio bottomed between the rocky canyon walls of the Castle Mountains and was dominated by two looming sentinels: 3,154 foot Castle Mountain to the north and 3,100 foot King Mountain to the south.

The carretas were arranged in a circle as usual, the camp of the fifteen Mexican drivers in the center. To the east, outside the circle, was the bivouac of the four Austrians. The two officers on watch patrolled in opposite directions, periodically passing each other as well as the two sleeping in the bivouac. Thus, for part of the time, the only two men on guard and awake were alone.

Late that night von Huber and Mueller were on watch, and they were the first to die. Naughton was lurking under one of the carretas with his bowie knife. When the colonel passed, Naughton jumped him from behind, grabbed him by the hair, snapped his head back and deftly cut his throat from ear to ear.

Hart was lying in wait for Mueller on the opposite side of the circle. He dispatched the major by the same savage tactic. Knight crept up on Stieglitz and Bosch and slit their throats while they slept.

The four Austrians had been murdered so quickly and quietly that none of the drivers were awakened. The other former soldiers, Robert Lee Philips, Wallace Jones, and Stewart, shot eleven of the Mexicans through the head as they lay on the ground. The remaining four Mexicans, one of them Cardenas, the head driver, were gunned down while attempting to flee.

Now the killers descended upon the carretas in a frenzy of excited anticipation. They tore open the barrels and scooped out the flour with their bare hands. Whoops, shouts, rebel yells echoed between the canyon walls when they began tossing out the treasure and discovered that the sacks of coins were but a small part of the great hoard.

Here were riches far beyond anything they had imagined.

Philips found several bottles of cognac in the Austrians' stores. He waved one above his head.

"Frenchy drinkin' likker! The stuff that's stronger'n hoss liniment!"

They drank in celebration. The drinking continued until they all passed out in a drunken stupor.

Knight awakened late the next morning with a large headache. By the time the others were astir his brain had cleared sufficiently for him to do some heavy thinking.

He reasoned that the Austrians were fleeing from Mexico with the treasure. He did not know how they had acquired the hoard, but it appeared obvious to him that they must have been pursued by someone. Therefore it would not be advisable for him and his pals to take all this wealth back across the border. Nor, for the present, could they carry all of it anywhere else. Six men could not drive fifteen ox teams. He explained this to the others after they sobered up.

"We've got to get us some help. Four more drivers beside ourselves. I figure we can make do with ten good four-wheeled wagons and hoss teams instead of these small Mex carts and ox spans. We can buy what we need in San Antone."

"You mean we'll have to leave some of this behind while we go on to San Antone?" Stewart demanded.

"Most of it," Knight nodded. "We'll fill our saddlebags with gold coin. As much of it as we can tote. Then, before we light out we've got us some digging, burying and burning to do."

They dug a great hole in the ground. After filling their saddlebags with gold, they closed the forty-five barrels again, rolled them to the hole and dropped them to the bottom.

They covered the barrels with a thick layer of dirt, which became the bottom of a mass grave. They dragged the corpses of the nineteen men to the hole and dumped them in, then shoveled in more earth until the hole was filled to the level of the surrounding ground.

The job was finished on the following day, but the wily Knight was not yet satisfied. He pointed to the fifteen looted carretas, still drawn up in a circle.

"Supposin' you're acomin' through the gap and you see those Mex carts all neatlike in a circle. You wonder what they're doing this side of the border and where's the folks that were in 'em? You mosey around lookin' and then you start diggin'. No suh! We've got to make this look like a massacre by hostiles."

They pulled the carretas over the filled-in hole, threw the ox yokes and gear on top, piled brush around and made a huge fire. The oxen were driven a short distance down the trail and turned loose. They were reluctant to drive off the horses of the slain officers but Knight pointed out that these magnificent animals might cause questions to be asked in San Antonio.

With saddlebags loaded with gold, the six ex-Confederates rode seventeen miles southeast to Rattlesnake Butte and made camp for the night. Will Hart did not eat. He rolled up in his blanket and explained that he had the "miseries with likely a touch of fever."

On the following day Hart swayed in his saddle and lagged behind while they were riding on towards Big Lake. He suggested that the others go on, he'd rest up a day or so in the bush beside the trail and then catch up with them at San Angelo.

They left Hart behind early in the afternoon. Stewart was suspicious. He thought that Hart was feigning illness and said so.

"He aims to double back to the Gap and dig up more gold."

"Why should he do that?" Knight asked. "He's totin' all his hoss can carry now."

"Suppose he aims to round up those furrin horses and use 'em to pack gold? We've seen the last of Will Hart unless—"

"Unless what?" Knight cut it.

"Unless one of us goes back right now and puts a slug into him for trying to double-cross us."

Knight debated briefly. Hart was tough and wiry. None of them had ever known him to be sick before. Besides, with Hart dead there would be one less to share in the treasure.

Hart was marked for liquidation and Stewart chosen ex-

ecutioner. He rode back to where they had left the sick man.

Hart had rolled himself up in his blanket after tethering his horse. He raised himself on his elbow, hearing Stewart's approach. His face was bathed in sweat. Fever shone in his eyes.

"How you feeling, Hart?"

"Bad. I'm burnin' up."

"Well now, I've something that'll stop the burnin'."

Drawing his long-barreled revolver, Stewart slammed a bullet into the body of the sick man. Hart fell back on the ground. Stewart mounted his horse and without a backward look at his victim he galloped along the trail to a stand of cottonwoods where the others had halted in the shade to wait for him. Knight raised an inquiring eyebrow.

"Dead," Stewart grunted and they resumed their journey toward San Angelo.

But Will Hart was not dead. The bullet aimed at his heart had drilled through his shoulder blade, emerging from his back. He was unconscious for a long time, how long he did not know. He dimly remembered darkness and daylight and being too weak to reach for his canteen.

After awhile the blood clotted in his wound and the fever subsided. It was probably three or four days later—he was not sure of the passing of the days—when he decided to try to ride to the nearest town.

His horse, still saddled, had broken the tether rope and strayed off in search of grass and water. Hart found him grazing beside a shallow stream close by.

Hart managed to climb into the saddle and ride slowly eastward towards San Angelo, hoping to catch up with the others. It apparently did not occur to him that all five of his pals had voted for his execution. He probably thought that Stewart had decided to double-cross the others and was on his way back to Castle Gap when he came upon Hart and shot him to seal his lips.

Hart reached the small settlement of Best, on what is now U.S. 67, and rode on to Big Lake. His wound was not healing, and it pained him incessantly.

About five days after starting his ride, and a dozen miles beyond Big Lake, he came to the last campsite of his pals. Buzzards were gorging on the mutilated bodies, and they

took flight with resentful slowness when he approached.

The five had been killed and scalped by a band of roving Comanches who had made off with their horses, firearms and the contents of their saddlebags. The bags had been ripped apart and scattered about the camp. The buzzards had taken over where the hostiles left off. None of the scalped, faceless and partly eaten bodies were recognizable.

The stink of death was in Hart's nostrils when he turned from the grisly scene. His one thought was to get away from there. Mounting with difficulty, he headed towards San Angelo again, telling himself he had even more to live for than before. All of the great treasure buried in Castle Gap was now his. He was the only man alive who knew about it.

Later that day he observed a band of hostiles at a distance. Again luck was with him. He had spotted them first, and he rode into the concealment of an arroyo. Whether they were the Comanches who had killed his pals or a band from another tribe, perhaps Apaches or Tonkawas, there was no telling, but he was sure of one thing. He was in country infested with numerous bands of hostiles, and he had to be very careful if he hoped to keep his scalp.

From then on he traveled only by darkness, hiding in brush and arroyos during daylight. His wound was more painful than ever; the throbbing had increased. Nevertheless he was determined to continue riding to San Antonio, almost two hundred miles beyond San Angelo. There, he was confident, he would run into other ex-Confederate soldiers, hopefully fellow-Missourians, whose help he could enlist in recovering the treasure.

One evening, not far from the settlement of Tankersly, fifteen miles west of San Angelo, he sighted a campfire on the mesa, decided it was the camp of white men, probably cowboys, and approached it cautiously.

From a hiding place in the mesquite he observed seven men eating around the fire. Beyond, a number of horses were tethered, and he now concluded that the men were either horse traders or cowboys with remounts.

He prudently buried his saddlebags still filled with gold coin in the mesquite before riding into camp. He suddenly

found himself confronted by drawn guns and discovered that he had wandered into a band of horse thieves.

Their leader, Jim Gunnison, was sympathetic. Hart resembled a living skeleton with a scraggy black beard below eyes sunken in their sockets. His bloodstained shirt was little more than a rag from which strips had been torn to bandage his shoulder.

The outlaws fed him and examined the wound. Gunnison shook his head and whistled softly.

"It's not mending, pardner. Festering bad inside. Come daylight best thing you can do is ride to Denton and see the doctor."

This frightened Hart. It confirmed his own belief that the wound was getting worse. When he bedded down it hurt so greatly that he couldn't fall asleep for a long while.

He was awakened before dawn by the sound of loud voices. He opened his eyes to find himself looking into the muzzle of a shotgun. The man behind it had a deputy sheriff's badge pinned to his shirt.

"On your feet!"

Hart obeyed. A sheriff's posse of about fifteen men were herding the horse thieves together.

"Get over there with the others!" The deputy emphasized the order by prodding him with the shotgun.

"Look here," Hart protested. "I'm not with these fellers. I came here last night and I'm headin' for San Angelo."

Gunnison tried to help Hart. He told the sheriff, John Lamar of Denton, that Hart was a stranger. The sheriff did not believe him.

Hart was jailed in Denton with the horse thieves. On the following morning he was too weak to stand on his feet, and the sheriff sent for the local physician, Dr. William Black, and a lawyer, John O'Connor.

Dr. Black examined Hart and told the sheriff: "He'll be dead before the day is over if we don't get him out of this cell and give him medical attention. Even then he can't live more than two-three days."

O'Connor, the lawyer, after questioning Gunnison and the other horse thieves, became convinced that Hart was not a member of the gang. He volunteered to defend him in court—if he survived.

Hart was released in the lawyer's custody and taken to

the home of Dr. Black who put him to bed in a room used as an infirmary. For the next two days Hart fought a losing battle to survive. Then he sent for O'Connor and confided his entire story to both the lawyer and the physician. When he had finished Dr. Black asked: "Why are you telling us this?"

"I'm dying, and I haven't any kinfolk. You two have been kind to me. I'd like to leave it all to you, share and share alike."

Before Hart died that night he drew a crude map of Castle Gap with all the landmarks he could remember. The most prominent was a huge "windowed rock" on a line with 3,154 foot Castle Mountain.

"If you stand on the small hill with your back to the mountain," he said in a weak voice, "you can sight down through the "window" to the spot where we buried the barrels. You'll have to dig deep—several feet below the grave where we hid the bodies."

Shortly after Hart succumbed, Dr. Black learned that the bodies of the five ex-Confederate soldiers massacred by a band of Comanches had been found in a badly decomposed state. This much of Hart's story was true. The rest might well be.

Black and O'Connor decided to go to Castle Gap and hunt for the treasure. They made preparations and were about to leave from Denton two weeks later, when they learned that a band of Kiowas had ambushed the stagecoach near McCamey, close by the Castle Gap changing station. The driver and the passengers had been massacred. Editorialized the San Angelo newspaper: "This is the latest of many terrible outrages carried out by bands of Comanches, Kickapoos, Creeks and Kiowas who infest the region. In truth, the U.S. Army offers the traveler scant, if any, protection against savage hostiles, outlaws and renegades between here and Fort Stockton."

O'Connor and Black were prudent men. They reasoned that if the treasure was as well buried as Hart told them it was, there was little likelihood that it would be discovered by accident. It would still be there for them to dig up when traveling conditions were safer.

Hart's treasure map was put away in O'Connor's safe where it remained for seven years. In the meanwhile Max-

imilian's friends in San Antonio had been waiting for the carreta train commanded by Colonel von Huber. When it failed to arrive at the mission of San Jose de Aguayo, they undoubtedly sent a courier to inform the emperor.

Maximilian, however, was involved in a matter of deeper concern—his life.

He had transferred his headquarters to Querétaro and taken personal command of his troops. There, after a siege, he was captured by Jaurez's forces and shot. The Empress Charlotte had gone to Europe and in her unsuccessful efforts to persuade Napoleon to save her husband's throne, had lost her mind. She never fully recovered, and she died at the Chateau de Bouchout, near Brussels, Belgium, in January, 1927.

By 1873 law and order had been established in southern Texas. In May of that year O'Connor and Black journeyed to Castle Gap. Equipped with Will Hart's map they set out to search for Maximilian's treasure.

They found the tall, windowed rock that he had described, sighted down through it with their backs to the mountain, and selected an area between the confines of the canyon walls.

Despite the sandstorms common to the region they discovered some deep ruts which had been made by big carreta wheels. They also found wagon irons that had been scorched by fire. After that they dug several exploratory holes but failed to locate the treasure.

Since then there have been many, and thus far fruitless, searches made by both professional and amateur treasure hunters.

The intriguing as well as frustrating thing about this cache is that its general location, between the two East-West Highways, U.S. 80 and U.S. 67, is well-authenticated. The Texas guide book compiled by the Writers Program of the U.S. Work Projects Administration describes it thus:

> ". . . The towering walls echoed to the rumble of Butterfield stagecoaches pulling in to the Castle Gap station. Pack trains clattered through behind their patient bell mares, and freighters' wagon trains wore deep ruts in the canyon floor, visible to this day. Stories tell of buried outlaw gold, and of a treasure in gold and jewels hidden

in the canyon by servants of the Emperor Maximilian. Today treasure seekers still come here to dig, principally in the vicinity of the ruined rock building that was the stage station."

There is no disputing the fact that the huge personal fortune of Emperor Maximilian is still there—five million dollars worth beneath the nineteen skeletons of the Austrian officers and Mexican drivers treacherously slain while transporting it to San Antonio.

And some day someone is going to find it!

CHAPTER 7

The Three Million Dollar Secret of Skeleton Canyon

"It's all still there in Skeleton Canyon where Billy Grounds and I hid it from the others, Hughie.

"Best ride in from the east across San Simon Valley to the foot of Davis Mountain. Here you'll find a good stream with a ten-foot waterfall. Next you'll come to a spring —Silver Spring we used to call it. A mile further there's another, Gum Spring.

"Between the two, but a little closer to the first spring, you look for a flat, square stone with two crosses scratched in it, one above the other. When you find the stone you dig straight on down . . ."

Lying on his deathbed old Zwing Hunt, conniving mule skinner, murderer and Arizona outlaw, disclosed to his nephew, Hugh Hunt, the site of three million dollars in treasure hijacked from a Mexican mule train in the desolate Peloncillo mountains on August, 1882.

The story of this hoard, originally the accumulated plunder of a Mexican bandit, Carlos Robles, who pillaged Sonora with his gang, begins with a double-crossing outlaw named Jim Hughes.

Half Mexican, half American and a discredit to both countries, Hughes lived in the small cow town of Galeyville, Arizona, in the Chiricahua valley east of Tombstone and about twenty miles from the Mexican border.

Among Hughes' tough and lawless fellow citizens were Zwing Hunt and an aspiring cattle rustler, Curly Bill Brocius, leader of a small band of outlaws.

Late in the spring of 1882, Curly Bill made one of his periodic drinking and wenching visits to Agua Prieta in Sonora, a few miles from the border. Here he heard a

rumor that with the Mexican authorities devoting more attention to the policing of northern Sonora, Carlos Robles intended to send his considerable fortune across the border for safekeeping.

On his return to Galeyville, Curly Bill confided this news to Jim Hughes, a quasi-member of his gang who occasionally participated in driving rustled cattle to Agua Prieta, where they would be sold.

"No one looks more Mex than you do or speaks the language better," said Curly Bill. "I'd like you to hang around Agua Prieta for awhile and find out what you can about Robles' plans. From what I understand he's made himself quite a pile. If he intends bringing it across the line we should be somewhere around ready to grab it."

Jim Hughes agreed. He saddled his horse, rode south into Sonora and remained there for a long time. By devious means he learned that Robles was planning to transport his loot across the border during the first week in August and that he would head northward through the Peloncillos, then west to Tucson.

Returning to Galeyville, Hughes found that Curly Bill was not in town. Either he had placed little credence in what he had heard about Robles' intentions or he had tired of waiting for Hughes to confirm the report. In any event he had taken himself off to parts unknown.

As July neared an end with no news of Curly Bill's whereabouts, Hughes became more and more restless. Robles' fortune-carrying mule train was a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity, he realized, one which was far too great to pass up.

Hughes sought out one of his pals, Zwing Hunt, and told him the story. The mule skinner emphatically agreed that they should carry out the hijack themselves. Hughes, however, was worried about Curley Bill's reaction if he returned to Galeyville and found out that he had been double-crossed.

"He ain't around now," Zwing pointed out. "The time to fret'll be if he does show up after we've dry-gulched the Mex train. Right now we need us a few good men to help out."

They recruited six other tough citizens of Galeyville to join them in the holdup: Billy Grounds, a nineteen-year-

old stableman who was ambitious to become a gun-slick; three cowhands, Dan Winger, Joey Peters and Jack Young; and two prospectors, Greg Morgan and Charley Snider.

On the first day of August they slipped quietly out of Galeyville at various times, rode across San Simon Valley and met at Antelope Pass near Animas. They then entered Skeleton Canyon together.

Zwing Hunt was the self-appointed leader. For the ambush he selected a strategic spot between the high canyon walls. Dan Winger was sent ahead to Silver Springs with the horses, which he was to graze and picket.

Zwing then divided the others into two groups. Three accompanied him up one side of the canyon. Jim Hughes and the two prospectors climbed up the far side. Both groups made camps among the rocks, well hidden from the ambush site below.

They maintained a watch for almost two days before the mule train came into view. The Mexican bandit chief, Carlos Robles, led the way. Behind him were twenty-six mules carrying his loot and fourteen members of his gang, mounted on horses.

These were a lot more Mexicans than Zwing had anticipated, but he had the advantage of surprise. The men below seemed to be totally unaware of the possibility of a holdup. They rode slowly and free of care, talking, laughing, singing.

Zwing steadied his rifle on a rock, took careful aim at Robles' back and triggered. The bandit leader toppled from the saddle with a bullet through the heart, and all seven repeating rifles cut loose with murderous fire.

Eight of the Mexicans and several mules were killed in the first fusillade and chaos swiftly followed. The survivors were too terrified to make a defensive stand. Their one thought was to escape from the death trap in which they had been caught. Men, mules and horses bolted in both directions between the narrow canyon walls. The relentless gunfire continued from above, killing more victims as they fled.

When Zwing and his men finally climbed down to the floor of the canyon they found it littered not only with human and animal corpses but with plunder. Some of the cowhide sacks had broken loose from the backs of rearing,

kicking mules. Some had ripped open, strewing the contents on the ground.

It took quite awhile for Zwing and his pals to gather the loot into one pile and what they did collect was by no means all. At least three loaded mules escaped the attack, bolting westward toward the open mesas beyond Skeleton Canyon. The cadaver of one was found in a dry wash several days later. The cowhide sacks and pack saddle were missing. What happened to the other two was never determined. The best guess is that cowhands or prospectors discovered them wandering aimlessly across a mesa and quietly took them and their cargo in tow to be disposed of a considerable distance away.

As for the hijacked loot that Zwing and his pals did collect in the canyon, Jim Hughes, who kept tally, wrote this list:

2 big Mex religus statoos made of solid gold.
1 box filled with diamonds.
39 bars of gold bullion.
72 bars of silver ingots.
95,000 in Mex gold dolars.
7 sacks (small) U.S. gold eegles.
6 sacks (small) U.S. gold half eegles.
11 sacks (small) mixed U.S. and Mex coins.

It was later ascertained that Robles had stolen the two priceless figures of Jesus and the Virgin from the niches of churches in Hermosillo. The diamonds, worth more than a million dollars, were looted from the vault of a Monterrey bank, and the gold bars, valued at $625,000., from one in Guaymas.

The men were for dividing the spoils then and there. Zwing objected, and Jim Hughes agreed with him.

"This stuff is much too heavy for us to carry back on our horses," Zwing argued. "If we could tote even part of it folks would ask questions." He paused and his hand made a sweeping motion towards the grim carnage.

"Then, after awhile someone sees all this and they figure it's our doing."

They made no attempt to bury the dead Mexicans and their animals. This would be a tedious, time-consuming

chore and as Jim Hughes pointed out, the sooner they returned to Galeyville, singly and in pairs, the better their chance to avoid suspicion.

They buried the loot temporarily near a live oak east of Silver Spring and agreed that when they met in town they would decide how and where to remove it so that each man could claim his share.

About a week went by before they all returned. Jim Hughes was relieved to learn that no word had been heard from Curly Bill Brocius whom he had double-crossed, and this encouraged him to attempt another double-cross. He had a secret meeting with Zwing and young Billy Grounds and suggested that the three of them dig up the loot and cache it elsewhere.

"No need sharing it with the others," he said. "We'll hide it in a safe place and tell 'em someone must have found it and made off with it."

Zwing and Billy Grounds acclaimed this as a fine idea. Young Billy said it would be much more profitable to share the loot among the three of them instead of all eight. Zwing expressed more caution.

"It's okay for Billy to go back to Skeleton Canyon," he said. "But not both you and me. They'd speculate what we were up to and tail right after us. Best you stay right here in town so they don't get suspicious."

Jim Hughes conceded, albeit reluctantly, that what Zwing had said made sense, and he remained behind.

Zwing and Billy Grounds started off for the canyon together. On the way Zwing disclosed what he had in mind. They'd pull another double cross and cut out Jim Hughes.

"We'll dig up the stuff and cache it somewhere else just like we told Jim," he explained shrewdly. "Only we won't go back to Galeyville. We'll lay low for awhile and afterwards we'll live like cattle barons for the rest of our lives."

Billy Grounds grinned in happy anticipation. "I'll buy me a big spread. The biggest damned spread in Arizona."

Approaching Animas they met an old Mexican farmer on a road, one Luis Hernandez, who was driving a wagon of produce to Galeyville.

"Can't let him go on to town," whispered Zwing.

"Wouldn't do for him to talk about seeing us so near to the canyon."

"Okay, I'll shoot him."

"Not now. We can use him and his wagon."

At gunpoint they forced the old man to dump his vegetables at the side of the road and drive his wagon ahead of them into Skeleton Canyon until they came to the site of the buried hoard. Here they ordered him to dig up the loot and load it on his wagon.

Then they went on, westward through the canyon, stopping approximately a half-mile beyond Silver Spring. Again Hernandez was ordered to stop the wagon. They made him dig a big hole, carry the loot to the hole and bury it.

When he had finished the job and tamped down the loose earth Billy Grounds put the muzzle of his revolver to Hernandez's head and killed him. Then they tossed the old man's body into his empty wagon and whipped the horses into a gallop.

After marking the cache with a flat stone on which Zwing scratched two crosses, they rode westward to Tombstone. Some days later, using assumed names, they obtained jobs as cow hands on the Chandler ranch, a few miles out of town.

Back in Galeyville Jim Hughes was waiting for them to return from Skeleton Canyon. When the passing days lengthened into weeks and finally a month went by without a word from Zwing or Billy Grounds his suspicions became a certainty. They had no intention of ever coming back. They had gone off somewhere with the loot.

Jim Hughes found himself bedeviled by trouble. The five pals he had double-crossed were hounding him. They demanded to know what had become of Zwing and Billy Grounds. Had he murdered them, intending to keep all the loot for himself? Or was he planning to meet them somewhere and share it with them.?

Then, too, Curly Bill Brocius returned to Galeyville and soon learned how he'd been double-crossed.

At first, in his fury, he was inclined to shoot Jim Hughes down in his tracks. Cooling off somewhat, he realized this was not the most satisfactory answer.

"You're going to lead me to the Robles' cache or else," he threatened.

Jim Hughes protested that he did not know where the loot was hidden, that it had been dug up and reburied by Zwing and Billy Grounds. Curly Bill refused to believe him.

"We're riding out tomorrow and you'd damned well better find it."

That night Jim Hughes decided he'd had enough. He slipped quietly out of town and started on a lone search for Zwing and Billy Grounds. What he intended doing if and when he found them would depend upon the circumstances.

At this point another character enters the story, Joe Healey, the tenacious deputy sheriff of Tombstone.

Healey had learned of the murder of old Luis Hernandez and also received a report that two suspicious characters, an older man and a young one, had been observed emerging from the western end of Skeleton Canyon. Closely following this, the ghastly killings in the canyon were discovered.

It was difficult for Healey to believe that only two men had been responsible for these murders but the two strangers were all he had to go on and he began a systematic search. This ultimately led him to the Chandler ranch accompanied by two possemen, Will Manning and Paul Everett.

They found Zwing and Billy Grounds in front of the bunk house. When the deputy sought to question them Billy went for his gun.

The shoot-out which followed was swift and spectacular. A few moments later, both possemen were dead, Billy was fatally wounded, Zwing had a bullet wound in the shoulder and Healey was bleeding from a bullet graze across his neck.

Zwing and Billy were taken to the hospital in Tombstone where the young would-be gun-slick died the next morning.

The wounded Zwing, however, soon began to recover and some days later he received an unexpected visitor—Jim Hughes.

Hughes was in Bisbee when he read an account of the

shoot-out at the Chandler ranch, and he had lost no time in heading for Tombstone.

When he called upon Zwing in the hospital his wrath and indignation subsided, soothed by Zwing's persuasive argument.

"Billy Grounds is dead, and I'm the only one left who knows where the cache is," Zwing said.

"You'n me will share it together after you get me out of here. We'll head across the border and stay in Mexico for a spell—until things cool down. Then we'll come back together and visit Skeleton Canyon."

On the following night Jim Hughes brought two horses to the back door of the hospital. A posseman named Culkins who was supposed to be guarding Zwing was sound asleep in a chair. Hughes crushed his skull with a powerful gun butt blow. He and Zwing mounted the horses and headed for the border, some twenty-six miles away. The escape was not discovered until the following morning.

Jim Hughes was never seen alive again, nor was his body found between Tombstone and the border. The best guess is that Zwing treacherously gunned him down in the picturesque wilds of northern Sonora.

What is certain is that Zwing Hunt remained in Mexico beyond the reach of American lawmen for many years. It was not until 1903, some twenty-one years later, that he appeared in San Antonio, an aged and failing man.

When the law finally caught up with him he was too sick to stand trial for the murder of Robles and nine of his Mexican followers, for the slaying of Luis Hernandez and the killing of the two possemen on the Chandler ranch.

While he was in the prison ward of the hospital he was visited by his only known relative, his nephew, Hugh Hunt, who had read about him in the newspapers.

Before he died, Zwing gave his nephew the torn, smudged scrap of paper on which Jim Hughes had penciled a list of the treasures they had gathered in the canyon that long ago day of the ambush. Zwing also gave him directions for finding the cache.

The first clue was to start at "the foot of Davis Mountain" but when Hugh Hunt went to Skeleton Canyon shortly after Zwing's death, he could not find any Davis Mountain.

The canyon region extends for many miles through the Peloncillos, both in New Mexico and Arizona north of San Simon Pass where the three million dollar trove was cached.

Either Zwing was mistaken about the name or else, on his deathbed he decided on a final double-cross, this time on his nephew and on the many treasure hunters who have been searching for his trove ever since.

CHAPTER 8

The Great Train Robbery Cache

Among the passengers boarding an eastbound Ohio and Mississippi Railroad train at Seymour, Indiana, on the evening of October 6, 1866, were three men destined to make railroad history as the first bandits to carry out a holdup on rails.

Two of them were brothers, John and Simeon Reno, leaders of an Indiana gang of outlaws whose crimes throughout the state ranged from safecracking and burglarizing banks to the robbery and murder of travelers on the highway. The third, Franklin Sparks, was a gang member the Renos selected to help them.

They seated themselves in the forward part of the first two coaches, lit up cheroots and settled down as though preparing for a long journey.

Soon afterward, when the open farmland gave way to woods on both sides of the right of way, John Reno sauntered forward to the open platform between the passenger coach and the Adams Express car.

Here he was joined by Simeon and Sparks. They drew the revolvers they had concealed under their coats, forced their way into the express car and with a revolver butt, knocked the Adams Express messenger unconscious before he could give the alarm.

John seized a leather pouch containing $10,000. in currency and tried to open a locked iron safe which held bank deposits amounting to more than $125,000. Only the messenger knew the combination. Knocking him out instead of forcing him to disclose it had been a mistake.

"We'll have to roll the safe out of the car and work on it later," said John. "Stop the train."

Simeon pulled the signal cord; the train ground to a stop. As the engineer and fireman hurried backward to ascertain

the reason for the emergency stop, they were startled to see the safe rolled to the side door of the express car and sent crashing to the ground.

At gun point they were forced to climb back into the engine cab and start the train on its interrupted journey.

Standing beside the tracks, the three outlaws went to work on the safe. They had brought a hammer and a jimmy with them for a possible emergency, but the four-hundred-pound safe frustrated them. It could not be cracked open, and it was much to heavy to carry off. They finally abandoned the attempt and took off with the $10,000.

The train puffed into the small town of North Vernon where news of the robbery was telegraphed back to Seymour. A posse was soon gathered. The quickest means of transportation to the scene of the holdup was in handcars and the outlaws had fled long before the possemen pumped their way to the spot, where they retrieved the safe.

Both the Renos and Sparks had been recognized by the engineer, the brakeman and some of the passengers. They went into hiding in the western part of the state and were indicted in absentia. The indictment, the first for the hold-up of a train, is still on file in Jackson County, Indiana. It charges that John and Simeon Reno and Franklin Sparks took from the Adams Express car: "One safe, the value of $30.00; three canvas bags in one leather pouch valued at $1.00, and $10,000. in gold coin, together with $33.00 in bank notes, commonly called National Currency."

A few months later the same Adams Express car was held up at the same wooded spot east of Seymour by two young men, who escaped with $8,000.

When John and Simeon heard about the robbery they were highly indignant. Who were these interlopers? Who dared to invade their territory and imitate them in perpetrating the kind of crime they had originated? This, they felt, was adding insult to injury. For more than two years the Renos had regarded all Indiana as a goldminer might regard a well-paying claim he is working.

John sent word to two of his other brothers, Frank and Bill, both members of the Reno Gang. The fifth brother, Clint, known as "the honest Reno," did not belong.

It wasn't long before Frank and Bill learned the

holdup was the work of two shiftless Seymour residents, Walker Hammond and Michael Collins.

Frank and Bill formed a "posse" with other members of their gang. They hunted down Hammond and Collins before they could spend the $8,000. After appropriating the loot the Renos virtuously delivered the two culprits to the sheriff of Jackson County, John Scott, who put them in the Brownstown jail to await trial for train robbery.

At this point John Reno turned over the leadership of the gang to Frank. He was retired, involuntarily, by the law after he took a trip to Gallatin, Missouri, where he stole $22,000. from the Daviess County treasury. When he was caught soon afterwards, he was sentenced to twenty-five years at hard labor in the Missouri State Penitentiary at Jefferson City.

John was somewhat of a philosopher. Many years later he noted in his memoirs: "When we arrived at the prison gates I looked up and read in large letters over the entrance: 'The way of the transgressor is hard. Admission twenty-five cents.' But I was on the deadhead list and went in free."

Under the leadership of Frank, the train holdup technique of the Reno Gang improved considerably. It was he who planned the May 22, 1868, stickup of the Marshfield Express of the Jefferson, Missouri and Indianapolis Railroad.

It was destined to become "The Great Train Robbery" which startled and intrigued the entire country. It became a classic enacted in many a melodrama and many an early movie. It also served as a working blueprint for the Jennings Gang, the Daltons, the James-Younger Gang, the Bill Cook Gang and other train robbers who followed.

On that eventful night the Marshfield Express departed from Jeffersonville, Indiana, just across the border from Louisville, Kentucky, at 9:30 P.M. It sped northward towards Indianapolis, where it was due to arrive at 2:40 A.M.

There was only one guard in the Adams Express car, Thomas Harkins. In his custody was $96,000. in gold coins, $24,000. in government bonds and a miscellaneous amount of paper currency and silver coins valued at about $1,500.

Frank was accompanied by twelve members of the gang, including brothers Simeon and William.

A few of the others are worthy of brief comment: Franklin Sparks, who had participated in the first train robbery, was designated as the "horse holder"—the prototype of the modern driver of the getaway car. Val Elliott had been a railroad brakeman. Charlie Anderson was a former locomotive engineer who became a talented safecracker. Charlie Roseberry had been a captain in the Union Army. As for Henry Jerrell, he was later described as "a formerly virtuous painter of Seymour who was perfidiously led astray by the Renos."

Frank and his gang rode to Marshfield, a water-and-wood stop fourteen miles south of Seymour. Here Sparks took charge of the horses, and the outlaws were divided into three groups.

The first group, headed by Fril Clifton, climbed poles along the right of way and did a thorough job of cutting down the telegraph wires.

The express stopped beside the Marshfield water tank at 11 P.M. While the firemen engaged in the usual chore of taking on water, David Hutchinson, one of the two engineers, began to oil the driving rods.

George Fletcher, the other engineer, remained in the cab. He did not hear an outlaw creep up behind Hutchinson and knock him out with his gun.

Having finished the watering job the two firemen headed towards the cab, saw the prone body of Hutchinson and ran towards him. They were quickly surrounded and beaten into unconsciousness.

Engineer Fletcher was next to be attacked. Charlie Roseberry climbed into the cab, hit him over the head with a poker and threw him out on the right of way.

Val Elliott, the former brakeman and Charlie Anderson, the ex-locomotive engineer, uncoupled the engine and express car from the coaches. Frank Reno and the others swarmed aboard the tender. With Andersen at the throttle they started forward.

Emerging from a coach, Conductor Americus Wheeler saw them setting off down the track and leaving the train behind.

"Hey!" he shouted and began running between the rails. "What's going on?"

When he caught sight of the outlaws on top of the express car, he drew his revolver and fired. Answering bullets whistled towards him. He fell, critically wounded. The sound of the shots frightened the passengers, who began to jump from the coaches. They all had the same idea—getting away from there—and they headed for the nearest trees.

Anderson drove on at a speed of twenty mph towards the spot about four miles ahead where Sparks was stationed with the horses. And Frank Reno led the way along the roof of the express car and dropped to the platform behind.

The door was locked and bolted from the inside, but they made short work of forcing it open. Harkins, the Adams Express messenger, was waiting, pistol in hand. A courageous man, he was determined to protect the valuable contents of the car to the last.

He did manage to get off a couple of wild shots before they rushed him. Harkins was slugged with gun butts, pokers and a crowbar. More dead than alive, he was thrown from the moving train into a swamp where he was found the next day. It took him a long time to recover from the terrible beating.

The outlaws stopped the train at the point where Sparks was waiting for them with the horses and unloaded the $96,000. in gold. This time, instead of being stored in one large safe, the coins were contained in three smaller iron boxes, each four feet long and two feet high. They were loaded on the backs of three of the extra horses which foresightedly had been brought along to carry the loot.

It was now long after midnight, and Frank Reno designated John Moore to guide them through the darkness, across the swampy terrain.

Moore was thoroughly familiar with the surrounding area. As a young man he had hunted and trapped over every foot of it. For almost three miles he led the way without the least hesitancy. Then Frank ordered a halt.

"Look here, Moore, we're heading towards Seymour, ain't we?"

"Sure." Moore answered with assurance. "Best way to go. Another mile and we start circling the town."

"I don't like riding so close. Suppose we meet a posse or some of those Pinkerton detectives?"

Moore tried to reassure him, but Frank Reno was stubborn. Escape was very much on his mind. It was at his order that the three boxes of gold coins were removed from the backs of the horses and buried in the muddy ground at a point approximately three miles from the railroad and eight miles south of Seymour.

Soon after the loot was cached there was an argument. Frank Reno declared that the gang ought to clear out of the state until excitement over the spectacular robbery died down. Moore, flushed with confidence by the success of the holdup, was for repeating it. The other outlaws were divided in their opinions.

"Do as you like, but mark well my words," Frank said ominously. "Everyone will soon be up in arms, and if you remain you surely will be caught."

Six members of the gang agreed with Frank. Four of them, Charlie Anderson, Al Perkins, Mike Rogers and Miles Ogle, fled with him to Windsor, Canada. His brothers, Simeon and William, decided to lay low for a while in Indianapolis.

The others, Sparks, Jerrell, Clifton, Roseberry and Elliott, chose to remain with Moore, who promptly planned to hold up another train.

On the night of July 10, 1868, these six boarded the Express near Shields, six miles west of Seymour, where it had stopped to take on water and fuel. Moore had heard that there would be $100,000. in the Adams express car and he followed the same procedure originated by Frank Reno.

Everything went along smoothly until the outlaws broke open the door of the express car. There they were stopped by a volley of bullets. Instead of a single messenger they encountered a number of Pinkerton detectives who had been waiting to spring a trap.

The gun duel that ensued was swift and furious. Moore, Jerrell, Elliott and Sparks were wounded. All six of the bandits had to retreat. They managed to gallop off on their waiting horses.

Frank Reno's grim prophecy came true soon afterward.

Roseberry, Elliott and Clifton were captured by the Pinkertons. While they were being taken back to Seymour they were intercepted by vigilantes. The trio of outlaws were taken from the detectives at gun point and lynched from the branches of a beech tree.

Then Moore, Sparks and Jerrell were traced to Aetna, Illinois, and arrested. They were placed on a train heading back to Indiana.

Three miles west of Seymour the engineer, Isham Hughes, brought the train to a stop. Some two hundred masked and armed men were blocking the rails.

The vigilantes boarded the coaches, quickly overwhelmed the Pinkerton guards and dragged the prisoners from the train. They were lynched from the same beech tree.

Simeon and William Reno were the next to be apprehended, tracked to their hideout in Indianapolis. With the town of Seymour swarming with vigilantes, the lawmen took no chances. The Renos were removed under heavy guard all the way to New Albany and placed in the jail in charge of Sheriff Thomas J. Fullenlove, who was a capable and courageous officer.

While these two were in jail awaiting trail, Pinkerton detectives found Frank Reno and Charlie Anderson in Windsor.

Finding them was one thing; bringing them back to the United States and lodging them in an American jail quite another. There was a delay while the outlaws fought extradition. Lord Monck, the Governor General of Canada was incensed when he found out that Frank, through an intermediary, had offered Monck's young son $6,000. to influence his father to refuse extradition.

Finally, Frank and Charlie Anderson were put aboard a boat for Detroit. They were heavily shackled and surrounded by Pinkerton guards. The boat rammed into a tug, and the two outlaws fell overboard. They almost drowned before they were rescued.

In Detroit they were transferred to a ship bound for Cleveland; then, by a roundabout route which by-passed Seymour, they were taken to Louisville. Finally, in the dead of the night they were spirited to New Albany where they were jailed with Simeon and William.

News that the three Reno brothers had been jailed could not remain secret for long. Another party of vigilantes, the "Southern Indiana Vigilante Committee," soon organized right in New Albany. They marched on the jail and shot Sheriff Fullenlove when he refused to surrender the keys to the cells.

Once they had relieved him of the keys, they stormed into the jail. William Reno was the first to be strung up to the beam in the corridor; Charlie Anderson and Frank Reno soon followed.

All three died quickly, but the job on brother Simeon was badly botched. His neck was not broken. Instead, he slowly strangled to death. His body twitched and his legs kicked feebly for half an hour before life left him.

Now John was the only survivor among the four outlaw Renos. Serving his sentence in the Missouri State Penitentiary, he truthfully declared that he did not know where the $96,000. loot of the Marshfield Express had been cached. His brothers had had no opportunity to communicate this information to him before their violent demise.

In Seymour, however, a spiritualist, one Richard Leander, declared he knew where the $96,000. in gold coin had been buried. On the night following the lynching the ghost of Frank Reno had materialized and had told him where the three iron boxes were hidden.

Leander offered to pass this information on to the Adams Express Company for the paltry sum of $300. The express company executives put him in touch with the Pinkerton Agency whom they had put in charge of the case.

The spiritualist was brought to New York City for a seance with George Bangs, superintendent of the Pinkerton Agency and Vice-President Gaither of Adams Express. The ghost of Frank Reno did not materialize but, back in Seymour, other spiritualists did.

The town was invaded by an army of mediums. They came from everywhere and for a time they did a land office business selling "revelations of the Reno gold" to gullible treasure hunters. To this day, however, the "ghost" of Frank Reno has revealed the exact location of the cache neither to a spiritualist nor to anyone who has searched for it.

CHAPTER 9

Mosby's Virginia Heirloom Hoard

In the most comfortable bedchamber of the Gunnell mansion, which he had appropriated for his Fairfax Court House headquarters, Brigadier General Edwin H. Stoughton snored loudly and contentedly.

For several days the Union forces under his command—the First Vermont, Eighteenth Pennsylvania, First Virginia and a brigade of the Fifth New York—had been pillaging the homes of Confederate families in the surrounding area of Virginia.

Day by day the gold plate, gem-studded jewelry, silver tableware, ornate candlesticks and other precious heirlooms had been accumulating in the burlap sack which he kept in a corner of his room. Now, on this rainy night of March 9, 1863, the sack was almost filled. Stoughton, who prided himself on being a connoisseur, estimated the "collection" to be worth $350,000.

He was sleeping soundly, when, sometime after midnight, there was a most undignified intrusion upon his privacy. His bed quilt was yanked downward. His night shirt was pulled upward. He received a resounding whack across his broad backside.

Sitting up indignantly he was confronted by a stranger surveying him with humorous blue eyes. The intruder was clean-shaven and slim, weighing no more than 120 pounds. His black raincoat was unbuttoned, displaying the butts of two big Colt revolvers in brass-studded holsters. The hat, which he carried in his left hand, was of gray felt, incongruously adorned with an ostrich plume.

"Ever hear of Mosby, General?

"That damned horse-thieving guerrilla rebel?" Stoughton spluttered angrily. "By God, man! You've come here in

the middle of the night to tell me you know where he is?"

"You're talking to him, General. You're his prisoner."

Incredulity appeared on Stoughton's face. Then he observed that the intruder was wearing a Confederate uniform beneath his raincoat. It was then that he noted the ostrich plumed hat.

He had heard that Captain John Singleton Mosby, leader of a small band of fast-riding, hard-hitting Confederates, wore a plume in his hat. It was a curious sort of cavalry guidon to show his irregulars where to rally around him during a hand-to-hand foray.

"If you're Mosby," Stoughton demanded, still unconvinced, "how in blazes did you get past my outposts and pickets?"

"You left an exposed outpost vulnerable, General," Mosby said, and added with a grin: "Just as you did in bed."

"But what happened to my sentries—to my guards?"

"We've captured all of 'em. If you'll dress, I'll escort you downstairs where you will join them."

Earlier that evening Mosby, a former Bristol, Virginia, lawyer, and, for a short time General J.E.B. Stuart's adjutant in the First Virginia Cavalry, had led his band of twenty men through the piney woods from Cub Run, south of Little Run Turnpike, an area patrolled by hundreds of Union soldiers.

His men were armed with revolvers and knives. They all wore black raincoats or slickers. They rode silently in the rain-chilled darkness.

It was an ideal night for the raid. They captured thirty-four of the enemy without firing a shot. As a preliminary to their descent upon Stoughton's headquarters they had made a stop at the Union arms depot and remount corral in Fairfax Court House, where they had surprised the guards and seized sixty-two saddle horses together with a number of newly-issued Spencer repeating rifles.

On reaching the Gunnell mansion they herded the captives together on the main floor. Leaving Sergeant "Big Yank" James F. Ames—so nicknamed because he had deserted from the Fifth New York Cavalry—in command of the guard, Mosby went to the upper floor alone and captured the sleeping brigadier general.

Fully dressed, Stoughton came down the staircase, protesting at every step. He was followed by Mosby, who carried the heavy sack of recovered Confederate treasure on his shoulder.

The prisoners were marched outside and commanded to mount the extra horses. Mosby tied the sack over the saddle of one of the horses and they started back towards their own lines. Their objective was General Stuart's headquarters in Culpepper, forty-six miles south, where Mosby intended to deliver the prisoners, horses and the Confederate heirlooms which he hoped might some day be claimed by their rightful owners.

Two experienced Confederate scouts, Corporal Welt Hatcher and Private George Whitescarver rode in advance of the augmented column. Despite the proximity of enemy troops they guided the irregulars through the first Union lines without detection.

A few hours later, however, Hatcher reported back to Mosby that there was a strong force of Union troops ahead where their road joined another in the vicinity of Haymarket.

"We'll swing around their left flank," said Mosby. "Circle eastward towards Manassas."

Hatcher shook his head. He explained that he had already thought of this and had sent Whitescarver eastward to reconnoiter. The scout had soon returned with the discouraging information that a second force of Union troops was spread out to the east.

"Then we'll circle westward," Mosby decided.

Hatcher led the way, swinging to the west of Haymarket. They then headed southwest toward Culpepper through the piney woods on a route which parallels the present superhighway, U.S. 211.

After riding a few miles beyond Haymarket, Mosby summoned "Big Yank" Ames to his side.

"We don't know what may be waiting ahead," he said. "If we encounter enemy soldiers and they recapture the prisoners, the horses and the rifles, that's all part of war. But all those heirlooms in the sack aren't part of war. They're outright robbery. Stoughton's men stole them from helpless civilians. You and I are going to bury that sack to

make certain that its contents don't fall into enemy hands again."

After ordering his men to continue the march Mosby rode to the rear of the column. Ames procured a spade somehow and joined him.

They halted their horses approximately midway between Haymarket and New Baltimore, a distance of four miles. Here they buried the sack between two pine trees.

Mosby marked the trunks of both trees with his knife so that he could find the spot again. He expected to return within days, or weeks at most, with a small party of irregulars. When not burdened by a number of prisoners and extra horses they could recover the sack without detection and carry it on safely to General Stuart's headquarters.

As it so happened this extra precaution turned out to be needless. The irregulars encountered no Union force on their march to Culpepper. It is a matter of historical record that Mosby formally delivered to General Stuart in good condition the following: one mortified Yankee brigadier general, two captains, partly clad; thirty-one pickets and sentries, a quantity of Spencer repeating rifles and sixty-two remounts.

It was one of the most daring exploits of the war, carried out less than fifteen miles from Washington, D.C. It gave the South a good laugh and greatly embarrassed the Union command.

"I hope, sir," Mosby said to General Stuart, "that beyond the Potomac our Rangers will now be regarded as soldiers, not guerrillas."

The North did not change its opinion about Mosby and his men but General Robert E. Lee did—and very promptly. The commanding general of the Confederate Army had viewed Mosby's Rangers as an insignificant guerrilla band. The capture of Brigadier General Stoughton pointed out the Rangers' possibilities to Lee. Two days later he sent Mosby his Special Order 82 which read:

His Excellency, the President, has been pleased to show his appreciation of the good services and many daring exploits of J.S. Mosby by promoting him to a captaincy in the Provincial Army of the Confederacy.
The general commanding is confident that this man-

ifestation of the approbation of his superiors will but serve to incite Captain Mosby to still greater efforts to advance the good of the cause in which we are engaged. He will at once proceed to organize his command, as indicated in letter of instructions this day forwarded to him from these headquarters.

For the next two weeks Mosby was much too busy to retrieve the sackful of heirlooms. Then, with his Ranger force increased to sixty-one men, he headed northward again. His objective, as he briefed Sergeant Ames, was to venture beyond New Baltimore, dig up the sack and skirmish with any small force of Union troops that they might chance to encounter on the way.

At about 10 that same night Mosby learned that a large enemy wagon train was encamped ahead on Little River Turnpike.

Mosby launched an attack, leading his Rangers out of the woods and firing at a gallop. He caught the wagon train guard, numbering two hundred Yankee cavalrymen, by surprise. They fired their carbines wildly, and three of Mosby's men dropped from their saddles.

But the revolvers of the Rangers proved much more deadly. The Union force lost thirty-nine men and the rest retreated northward in great disorder, abandoning the wagon train.

Mosby decided that the sackful of heirlooms could wait until a later date. It would remain safely under the earth where he and Ames had buried it. Escorting the captured wagon train with its cargo of Yankee military supplies back to Culpepper had a priority.

In the course of the next few days he led his Rangers against a force of Union troops at Chantilly and another at Miskel Farm. Both were successful and he took eighty-two prisoners.

Shortly thereafter he received another communication from General Lee who wrote: "I have the pleasure of forwarding your commission as Major of Partisan Rangers."

From then on there were no more opportunities to dig up the treasure hoard of heirlooms.

His Rangers became a Confederate force which constantly goaded and badgered the Union Army in Virginia.

They disrupted its communications, cutting telegraph lines faster than they could be repaired. They captured wagon trains; they intercepted supplies for Yankee regiments in the field by day, and at night they struck at outposts and picket lines, taking many prisoners.

Mosby acquired a twelve-pound mountain howitzer during one of his raids. Although he had turned over to General Lee's units all the artillery pieces he had captured up until now, the mobility of the little cannon intrigued him and he kept it.

He found a competent gunner in bearded Sam Chapman. Chapman demonstrated his proficiency near Manassas Junction: with one shot he blew up the locomotive of a train carrying reinforcements and supplies to General Hooker's army. Then the rangers vaulted into their saddles and charged behind Mosby. The Yank soldiers in the stalled train fired carbines, then fled. The Rangers captured twenty-nine prisoners and all of the supplies.

When word of this latest outrage reached Washington, D.C., the federal government put a price on Mosby's head, dead or alive.

Mosby harassed other railroads after that; the Orange and Alexandria; the Alexandria, Loudoun and Hampshire; the Baltimore and Ohio.

In some of these daring forays he seized gold and currency. His largest haul was made on the B and O track where he stopped a train and removed a $100,000. Union Army payroll from an Adams Express Company car.

As far as can be determined neither Mosby nor any of his men ever kept (or buried) a part of this loot. He was scrupulously honest and insisted that all of it be turned over to Confederate Army headquarters.

With the passage of time he became concerned over his failure to recover the sackful of valuable heirlooms, and one day he sent Sergeant Ames with a detail of six men to dig it up. They were caught by soldiers from one of General Custer's units and brought to Front Royal.

Custer wasted no time. He declared that they were guerrillas and ordered them to be hanged without a trial.

On the morning following the execution Mosby rode into Front Royal alone, and at the risk of his life.

Undetected, he made his way to the crude gallows where his men's bodies were still hanging. A placard had been pinned to Ames' chest: THIS WILL BE THE FATE OF MOSBY AND ALL HIS MEN!

Mosby's eyes flashed in anger and his retaliation was swift. His Rangers had captured more than seven hundred enemy soldiers. Some of them has been sent to Richmond, but several score still remained in the stockade at Rectortown.

He returned to Rectortown at a gallop and ordered that the prisoners who had been attached to Custer's command be separated from the others. There were twenty-eight of them.

"Your general swung seven of my Rangers and so seven of you will hang," Mosby informed them grimly. "Draw lots!"

That night the Rangers hung the seven condemned prisoners on the Winchester Turnpike near General Custer's headquarters.

Mosby was not yet finished. Under a flag of truce he sent one of his Rangers, young John Russell, to General Sheridan's headquarters.

Russell's message reminded the general that Mosby was holding seven hundred Union prisoners and announced that he would continue to execute one for each of his own men hanged.

"This is impudence!" Sheridan stormed. "I'll show Mosby I'm not to be threatened. I'm going to hang you!"

Russell did not show alarm. He nodded as if this were exactly what he had expected Sheridan would say.

"I've got a message for you that wasn't put into writing, General," he said. "I was to inform you that if a hair of my head was touched under a flag of truce, one hundred of your men who are our prisoners will be executed."

Sheridan turned beet-red. Russell rode back to Rectortown unharmed.

The Rangers continued to harass the Union forces. Mosby was promoted to the rank of colonel in recognition of his outstanding service to the Confederacy.

With Ames dead, the only man who knew the exact spot where the Confederate heirloom treasure was buried was Mosby.

He continued to intend to recover it but somehow circumstances—or fate—always prevented him from doing so.

On April 21, 1865, twelve days after Lee's surrender, he disbanded his Ranger force. He returned to Bristol, where he became busily engaged in his legal practice which had been disrupted by the war.

In 1878 he went to Hong Kong as the U.S. consul and remained there for seven years. Then he returned to his law practice. Later, he became an assistant attorney in the U.S. Department of Justice.

Shortly before his death in 1916 at the age of eighty-three, he told some of his close friends: "I've always meant to look for that sack we buried after capturing Stoughton. Some of the most precious heirlooms of old Virginia families were in that sack. I guess that one of these days someone else will find it."

To this day no one has.

CHAPTER 10

The $375,000 Custer Massacre Cache

Although the story of the Battle of the Little Big Horn and General George A. Custer's last stand has been written time and time again, little has ever been chronicled of one dramatic aftermath involving Captain Grant Marsh, his river steamboat, and its cargo of $375,000. in gold bars.

From time to time discoveries of gold had been reported in a number of areas of eastern Montana as well as in the Black Hills of the Dakotas. And so it happened that in 1874 when Custer started for Paha-Sapa in the Sioux country on what was supposed to be a mission of friendship, his Seventh Cavalry was accompanied by five civilians. Two were naturalists; one was a geologist. The other two, William T. McKay and Horatio N. Ross, were experienced goldminers who had previously prospected around Sacramento.

Late that July McKay and Ross discovered gold in Sioux territory. Custer confirmed this officially in a report to Washington, D.C., and somehow a reporter on the *Chicago Inter Ocean* got a scoop on the news.

On August 27, 1874, the *Inter Ocean* triumphantly headlined the story and thus precipitated a gold rush:

GOLD!!!
THE LAND OF PROMISE!
Stirring News from the Black Hills
THE GLITTERING TREASURE
Found At Last—A Belt of Gold Territory 30 Miles Wide
The Precious Dust
Found Under the Horses' Feet
EXCITEMENT AMONG CUSTER'S TROOPS

Within two years more than 15,000 gold seekers swarmed into the territory and settlements and prospectors' camps mushroomed along the Yellowstone and its tributary, the Big Horn.

The *Far West*, skippered by the veteran riverboat man, Captain Grant Marsh, was one of the few steamboats that poked a square bow between Bismarck and points on the Yellowstone, carrying gold shipments as well as passengers, mail, and miscellaneous freight. She was the only steamboat that dared to make regular runs beyond Williston to remote points in the roiling, rock-trapped gorges of the Big Horn and the even more hazardous fork of the Little Big Horn.

The *Far West* was tied up on the bank of the Little Big Horn, her crew cutting and taking on a load of firewood on June 27, 1876, when Captain Marsh heard about the Custer massacre from a passing Crow deer hunter.

He was apprehensive as well as shocked for he had put in at Williston on the western part of his run to take aboard a shipment of $375,000. in gold bars for delivery in Bismarck on the return voyage.

Captain Marsh summoned Dave Campbell, his pilot-mate, and Ned Jenks, his bo's'n. He told them the news.

"Get the cordwood stacked aboard quick as you can," he ordered. "I want to cast off before some of those Ogalala Sioux take it into mind to attack us."

Prodded by Campbell and Jenks, the crew chopped and loaded faster than they had ever done before. They were still at it when a couple of Seventh Cavalry scouts appeared. One was Running Wolf, a full-blooded Crow, the other a half-breed named Osgood. They confirmed the massacre of Custer and his entire column and also delivered an urgent message from Major General Alfred H. Terry.

"Yellow Hair and men are all dead," said Osgood. "Lieutenant Bradley is bringing the wounded from Reno's and Benteen's column here to your boat. General Terry asks you to take them aboard and carry them back to Fort Lincoln."

Fort Abraham Lincoln was near Bismarck, a distance of approximately 740 miles from where the *Far West* was then tied up.

Captain Marsh immediately made preparations to receive the wounded. Some of the crew were put to work cutting the long prairie grass and laying it out below deck with canvas over it for mattresses. The scant supply of medicines and bandages was broken out of lockers. The boiler crew headed by engineer Tom-joe Hauser fired up a head of steam so that no time would be lost.

All through the night Marsh and Campbell stood watch, awaiting the arrival of Lieutenant James Bradley and the wounded. On the deck, below their pilothouse lookout, Jenks and a half-dozen men armed with carbines were on the alert to repel hostile Sioux.

Nothing happened. It wasn't until the afternoon of June 29 that a squad from Bradley's company arrived, carrying three wounded cavalrymen in litters made from saplings and the hides of slain horses.

Another night of waiting passed. On the morning of June 30, several more wounded were brought aboard. And in the next three days there were more wounded, carried in litters by Bradley's dog-tired soldiers.

Tom-joe Hauser had been keeping up a head of steam since the first news arrived. Early on the morning of July 3, he invaded the pilothouse. Grimy, wearing nothing but a towel breech-clout, he was sweating from every pore.

"I've been keepin' fired-up and aroastin' all this time. If we have to wait much longer there won't be wood left for us to run on."

Marsh nodded sympathetically. The weather had been hot. In the engine room it was sheer hell. He sent Jenks ashore with another chopping party and Tom-joe below to continue his boiler watch.

Later that morning General Custer's wounded horse, Comanche, was brought to the boat, hoisted aboard and tethered in the stern. Tom-joe spat in disgust and his spittle sizzled into angry steam against the boiler.

"Is this what we've been keepin' the fire goin' for? A claybank cayuse!"

Soon afterward the last of the wounded arrived and with them Major General Terry. In addition to giving Marsh last minute orders, Terry handed him a diary found on the body of Mark Kellog, the adventurous *Bismarck Tribune* reporter who had ridden with Custer's column. The final

entry penned the last recorded words of any member of the ill-fated column:

"We leave the Rosebud tomorrow. By the time this reaches you we will have met and fought the red devils. I go with Custer and will be at the death——"

Terry asked Marsh to make the hazardous 740 mile run down the Big Horn, the Yellowstone and the Missouri at all possible speed so that the fifty-two wounded men aboard might receive medical treatment as soon as possible. His final words were solemn and significant. It was the first admission that the dashing Custer had recklessly led his column into a tragic trap.

"You are about to start on a trip with fifty-two wounded aboard. This is a bad river to navigate and accidents are likely to happen. I wish to ask of you that you use all the skill you possess, all the caution you can command, to make the journey safely.

"You have on board the most precious cargo a vessel ever carried. Every soldier here who is suffering with wounds is the victim of a terrible blunder; a sad and terrible blunder."

On the afternoon of July 3, the *Far West* began its epic run with Marsh at the wheel and Campbell at his side. She ran the Little Big Horn wide open at fifteen knots, something no river pilot had dared do before.

Safely navigating past the concealed sand bars and abrupt turns, she reached the junction with the swifter-flowing Big Horn and started the thirty-three mile stretch through the gorges which would take her to the Yellowstone.

Marsh expertly avoided jutting, saw-toothed rock and drifting trees carried down from the high country beyond Fort Smith. He steered the *Far West* around bluffs looming up on either shore where the river narrowed in sweeping curves. Then, less than four miles from the Yellowstone, at the most dangerous curve in the river, Marsh saw that a large Sioux war party was waiting on the bluff ahead.

A fire-arrow flamed in an arc and landed on deck. Marsh thrust his stubbled chin out of the pilothouse window and roared: "Water buckets aft!"

Boots pounded along the wooden deck followed by sloshing sounds as deckhands extinguished the blaze,

Marsh's hand reached angrily for the whistle cord. Ear-splitting shrieks echoed from bluff to bluff flanking the treacherous gorge, but they failed to disperse the two hundred Sioux warriors lining the nearby shore.

"Wasting good steam, Cap'n," said Campbell. "Crazy Horse's braves won't scare at a whistle toot. Not after what they did to Custer."

"Reckon you're right . . ."

Another fire-arrow landed aft. Campbell grabbed the Springfield in the pilothouse, aimed and fired. His bullet pierced the head of a Sioux on the cedar-tufted bluff.

Bo's'n Jenks and other members of the crew also opened fire with carbines. The *Far West* churned ahead, running the Sioux gauntlet of flaming arrows and bullets.

Marsh stuck his head out of the pilothouse window again: "All the wounded safe below deck, bo's'n?"

"Exceptin' Custer's horse."

The claybank gelding, sole survivor of the massacre and bearing seven bullet wounds, was still tethered in the stern.

"Picket Comanche to port of the pilothouse and be quick about it!"

The *Far West* was now two hundred yards from the bluff. Thirty seconds later her curving course narrowed the gap to a hundred and fifty yards. Then Marsh was able to ease her off. A few minutes later she rounded the bend and was out of range.

Twenty-one Sioux were killed in the encounter. Aboard the steamboat one deckhand, Sam Tyler, had been slain by a Sioux bullet and a wounded cavalryman, Corporal Wentzel, had succumbed. The corporal had been suffering greatly from a festering gunshot wound in the belly. His death was a merciful release.

Now Tom-joe reappeared in the pilothouse. He was still wearing only his towel breech-clout.

"Running short of cordwood again, Cap'n. Didn't take on much of a load before we left."

"Well—" Marsh paused and reflected.

Darkness was upon them. Soon they would reach the juncture of the Big Horn and the Yellowstone. Once beyond, they would be safe enough from Indian attack to put into shore and cut more wood.

Marsh decided to wait, but when they approached the

juncture of the two rivers, they saw the distant glow of fires on the bank of the Yellowstone.

"Another Sioux war party!" said Campbell and swore.

At this point Marsh thought it best to wait no longer to replenish the wood supply. If the *Far West* ran out of fuel while in range of another war party the result might well be disastrous. The helpless wounded placed in his charge by Terry would be butchered.

In addition Captain Marsh, an honest, conscientious man, felt a second responsibility, the $375,000. gold bar shipment taken aboard at Williston. Come hell or high water, he had never lost any valuable cargo before, and he had no intention of doing so now by reason of a Sioux attack.

He decided to cut and load wood immediately and, at the same time, to bury the gold on shore for temporary safekeeping. On the next run of the *Far West*, when conditions would be more peaceful, he would reload the gold and carry it on to Bismarck.

The riverboat put in to shore less than half a mile before the Yellowstone. Here the line of bluffs gave way to a series of hills.

While Jenks and members of the crew chopped wood under the starry sky, Marsh, assisted by Campbell, made several trips with the gold bars, carrying them approximately five hundred yards inland, where they cached them at the foot of the nearest hill. They dug the hole on the far side, at the base of the slope facing away from the river.

Resuming their journey, they entered the Yellowstone and the glow they had seen at a distance became a long line of campfires strung out along the shore.

Marsh's anxiety somewhat diminished. The row of campfires appeared much too orderly to have been made by Sioux. He steered the *Far West* closer to shore, and Campbell stepped out of the pilothouse.

He returned a short while later and reported that soldiers were camped on the riverbank.

"They're signaling for us to put in, Cap'n."

Marsh slowed the throbbing engines and maneuvered cautiously shoreward. He found that several companies of General John Gibbons' command, en route to join Major General Terry, had been stymied by the river.

Marsh was asked to ferry them across. Aware that Terry might be in urgent need of these reinforcements, Marsh did so, losing two hours.

Resuming the journey under a full head of steam, the *Far West* traveled on throughout the night and the next morning—the Fourth of July.

They came to the Missouri and at Fort Buford, Marsh made a brief stop to put ashore a wounded Crow scout, Little Elk, who had a bullet through a lung and had begged to die among his own people.

A few hours later Tom-joe Hauser, even sweatier and grimier than before, informed Marsh that they were again running out of fuel.

Marsh put in at the first stand of timber he saw on the riverbank and led a tired chopping party ashore. After that they again traveled through the night. At Fort Stevenson the *Far West* was halted long enough to obtain a roll of black cloth. Marsh had it cut up to be hung from jackstaff and derrick.

"We'll arrive in mourning," he told Jenks. "It won't be easy to give the sad news in words. There will be widows waiting at the dock."

The *Far West* reached Bismarck at 11 P.M. on July 5. Despite the stops, she had run an average of nearly 350 miles a day, much of it through treacherous, uncharted waters. She established a record which still stands.

Marsh was right about "widows waiting at the dock." One of them was Elizabeth B. Custer, wife of the slain general.

Among those sharing the vigil was Clement Lounsbury, editor of the *Bismarck Tribune,* who was hoping to hear some news about his reporter, Mark Kellog.

Marsh gave him the diary found on Kellog's body and also the grim details of Custer's last stand.

Horrified, Lounsbury hurried back to his newspaper and then to the telegraph office. On the following day the story appeared in the *Bismarck Tribune,* and on July 7, almost twelve days after the massacre, it was first printed in the East, in the *New York Herald.*

Almost two months went by before Marsh took the *Far West* back to the juncture of the Yellowstone and the Big Horn. Early in September, following a series of torrential

rains, he tied up beside the riverbank. The initial landmark—where to tie up—was easy to locate, for tree stumps, marking the site of the trees that had been cut for cordwood, were plain to be seen.

But when they came to the far side of the hill, Marsh and Campbell found the base of the slope a morass of mud and stony scrag. The heavy rains had loosened tons of earth on the slope and washed it to the foot of the hill with almost landslide force.

The two riverboat men dug for several hours. They found not a single bar of gold.

On the next trip Marsh stopped the *Far West* at Williston and enlisted the help of some prospectors. His second search, with reinforcements, proved equally unsuccessful.

In Bismarck Marsh was questioned about the missing gold bars. The authorities also took testimony from Campbell, Jenks, Tom-joe, and various members of the crew. Major General Terry sent an affidavit in which he praised Marsh and declared that without Marsh's swift and careful transport of wounded to Bismarck, many of them would have succumbed for lack of surgery.

Marsh was absolved of any suspicion that he had secreted the gold with intent to return later and divert it to himself.

"In a time of tragic trial and tribulation, under great personal strain and threatened, as he believed himself, his crew, and the wounded to be, by a second attack of hostile Sioux, he acted to the best interest of all concerned," was the report. "His decision, under the circumstances, to bury the gold bars was not only justifiable but commendable."

Marsh made at least two more vain attempts to find the gold. Residents of Williston who tried to find it were also frustrated.

Down through the years the rains of early fall and the freshets of water from spring thaws have washed additional tons of earth down the slope of the hill. The $375,000. gold cache remains hidden where Marsh buried it—near the junction of the Big Horn and the Yellowstone.

CHAPTER 11

The Cisco "Santa Claus" Cache

Whenever stories of the great peace officers of the Southwest are recounted, names like Wyatt Earp and Captain Frank Hamer of the Texas Rangers usually come up. Rarely does one hear about Sheriff Si Bradford of Eastland, Texas, one of the greatest of them all.

Si was a smiling, even-tempered lawman who never fanned a six-gun or quickly beat an outlaw to the draw. He shot it out two shotgun shells at a time. Out of habit he wore a .44 Smith and Wesson in a worn holster. And he carried a small gambler's derringer in his right boot for the same reason. But his killing gun—the one that terminated the careers of several badmen—was his double-barreled .12 gauge shotgun.

Si was really terribly angry only once, two days before Christmas, 1927, when the First National Bank of Cisco was robbed of $12,000. This, together with $26,000. in gold and silver netted in previous holdups, comprised the loot cached by the Billy Turgen gang.

While a $38,000. hoard may not be large compared to other troves chronicled in these chapters, this one is unique. It was the loot of the meanest outlaw who ever robbed a bank—he did it by masquerading as Santa Claus.

Si Bradford was alone in his office in the Eastland courthouse on the morning he received the alarm. The agitated voice on the telephone was a teller in the Cisco bank.

"The First National Bank has just been robbed by Santa Claus. The shooting is still going on. Dead men are lying all over the street."

"Santa Claus, eh?" At first the sheriff thought he was dealing with a drunk or a practical joker. Then he heard shots in the background.

"Did you notify the Rangers? Good. I'm on my way."

It's ten miles due west on U.S. 80 from Eastland to Cisco. Si drove into the town less than ten minutes later and found a shambles in the midst of the civic holiday decorations. Cisco was a town of panic and terror, of shocked and wrathful citizens.

As he drove towards the First National Bank he swerved around a car almost blocking the street. It was perforated by bullets. So was the bandit behind the wheel. There was a .45 automatic on the seat beside him.

Several men had gathered in front of the bank. Two bodies of Cisco policemen were sprawled near the entrance. One still had a revolver gripped in his dead hand. The other was staring straight up into the sky with unseeing eyes. Blood was oozing from a hole in the center of his forehead.

Bill Gilmore, a rancher from Ranger, and a friend of Si's, was sitting on the bank steps while his bloody arm was being attended to by a physician. Six others were waiting to have their wounds dressed.

They and Gilmore pieced the story together for the sheriff.

A car with several men in it had stopped near the bank. One of them, who was later identified as Billy Turgen, was dressed as Santa Claus. He stepped out of the car and paraded around in front of the bank long enough to attract a small crowd of children. When he went inside they trooped after him, thinking he was going to give out presents. Three members of the gang followed them.

Santa Claus approached the teller's cage and whipped out two .45 Colts. The other three bandits each pulled out an automatic, and one of them stepped up beside Turgen, empty sack in hand. The teller obediently filled it with $12,000. in cash, all he had in the cage.

Some of the bank employees had pistols or revolvers. So did some of the customers—ranchers and oilmen. All of them were boiling mad at the trickery, but none drew a gun for fear of hitting one of the several youngsters milling about.

This was exactly what Turgen and his pals had counted on. As they edged toward the door, one of them seized two little girls. He pushed them out of the entrance and used

them as a shield, as he backed towards a car. Turgen and the other two bandits started toward a second car parked behind the first.

Two policemen appeared with drawn guns. They were forced to hold their fire lest they hit a child. They didn't have a chance—both of them were cut down by the bandits' bullets.

One of the gang jumped into the second car, but for some reason Turgen, who was carrying the money sack, and the third gunman changed their minds. They headed back toward the first car, the one containing the two children.

At this point irate citizens opened fire at the bandit in the second car, killing him. Turgen and his pals returned the fire, wounding seven, Bill Gilmore among them, before speeding out of town.

"If you're going after 'em, I'm going with you, Sheriff," said the wrathful Gilmore. By this time his left arm was in a sling but, as he pointed out, he could still use his gun arm.

They drove westward on U.S. 80 toward Putnam in Callahan County.

"We figured that by this time the Rangers had set up a roadblock on the main highway," Gilmore said later. "So Si Bradford and I decided we'd best look at some of the side roads.

"There are several old cattle trails leading off U.S. 80. In the past few years oil prospecting outfits had been sending trucks over these trails, which dwindled off into nothing but brasada-like wilds of mogote thickets, scrub oak, mesquite and occasional prickly pear. It was fine hideout country for bandits like Turgen; we were afraid of what he'd do to the kids after they were not useful any longer as shields.

"We were both thinking the same thing when we turned off into the first likely side road—fearfully expecting that we'd come upon the bodies of those two little girls.

"I sensed what else was going through Si's mind. He always did have a certain amount of respect for the oldtime badmen with whom he'd shot it out. Even the first, a cattle rustler named Yancy who had shot Si in the arm, the only time he ever had been wounded. Si had brought him in to jail with buckshot in Yancy's legs—after they had patched up each other's wounds.

"But this type of outlaw with whom he was familiar as a peace officer had vanished then and there as far as the sheriff was concerned. The treacherous Turgen was a new kind of criminal to him—a breed that sprayed lead around with an automatic pistol and used kids for shields. Si always had had contempt for automatics. And he loved kids.

"We came to the end of the trail, where the mogote closed in tightly. Nothing could have gone further without chopping. We backed out and tried another trail, and another. We kept on hunting and it was getting colder. There were the makings of a norther blowing across the Panhandle, and we were feeling it.

"Towards dark we were following a trail when about three miles from the highway we heard voices. We cut the engine and listened, but the way the wind was whistling through the scrub we weren't sure.

"We went on again and when we came to the end of the trail, we found the car we had been hunting. It was butted deep into the mesquite, and the little girls were in it, crying and terrified. There was no sign of the three bandits.

"We bundled the frightened youngsters into our car and headed back to Cisco to deliver them to their frantic parents."

When the sheriff and Gilmore returned to Cisco, they found that the town was already tidying up. The three dead men had been taken to an undertaking establishment. A couple of Rangers had arrived from Austin and fingerprinted the dead bandit in the hope of identifying him. They never did.

On the following day one of the greatest manhunts in the annals of the Southwest got under way. Cisco organized a large posse. So did other towns in the surrounding area. No one would rest easy until the three surviving outlaws —Turgen, Clem Burns, and "Fat Face" Steele—were caught or killed.

Si Bradford did not join a posse. He was accustomed to playing a lone hand. The hunt was something he regarded as personal. The holdup had occurred in Eastland County, *his* county where he had maintained law and order for a good long time. This was an insult and a direct challenge.

He went back to the place where the abandoned car had been discovered and started his search from there.

Tracking through the brush and mesquite he found the ashes of a campfire and nearby, earth from a hastily-dug hole. Convinced that the bandits had buried the loot, he did not take the time to dig it up but continued pursuit.

He found that the trio had circled back through the brush and emerged on U.S. 80 approximately eight miles west of Cisco. There he lost the trail and temporarily had to abandon the hunt.

Returning to town, he learned that the bandits had flagged down an unsuspecting motorist, an oil engineer named Trowbridge. They had knocked him unconscious with a pistol butt, heaved him out of his car and driven it off westward.

Trowbridge said that the three outlaws had not been carrying a sack or anything else. Si Bradford took this as a confirmation that they had buried the loot at their campsite.

That same evening the sheriff received a report that Turgen, Burns and Steele had been seen outside of Breckenridge, about thirty miles to the north. Then there was a second report, this one from a filling station near South Bend, another thirty miles beyond Breckenridge.

South Bend was an old, worked-out oil town and there were a number of abandoned oil rigs and shacks in the vicinity where hunted outlaws could hide out.

Si Bradford started for South Bend at dawn. About an hour and a half later on Route 67 he met a car loaded with possemen from Cisco. They were going back to town and told him that they had patrolled throughout the night without seeing any sign of the bandits.

The sheriff went on, looking for a place in the narrow road where he could turn around and follow them. He was still looking a quarter of a mile further on when suddenly a bullet drilled through his windshield, missing his head by scant inches.

A car plunged out of the mesquite at the side of the road. The bandits were in it. They had been hiding in the bush, waiting for the posse to drive out of sight. Now, as they raced along Route 67, the sheriff took up hot pursuit.

Bradford gained steadily on the other car. About ten miles further on, realizing they would be overtaken, they ground to a scorching stop, jumped from the car and

dashed towards the mesquite, fanning out while running.

Stopping in the bush, they began shooting at the sheriff as he advanced on foot.

It seemed incredible that Bradford wasn't hit by one of the bullets that whistled past his head. His .12 gauge boomed like a cannon, and Steele went down with buckshot in his legs. It boomed again and Clem Burns, too, fell with buckshot wounds in his legs.

The sheriff halted and coolly reloaded both shotgun barrels. This maneuver thoroughly unnerved Turgen, who turned and scurried into the mesquite. A load of buckshot hit him in the arm before he disappeared from sight.

The possemen had heard shots and now were returning. While the sheriff was handcuffing Steele, Burns crawled into the brush and vanished. The pursuing posse were unable to find either him or Turgen.

Not that they looked very hard. Although in that area there are many arroyos in which a man may hide, Si Bradford and the posse figured that with no food and with wounds needing attention, it was just a matter of time before Turgen and Burns would either die in the brush and save the county an expense of a trial or come out and give themselves up.

So it proved. A few days later they emerged on the highway near Graham, a few miles north of South Bend, to surrender. Both of them were in bad shape.

"I've got something to ask," said Turgen to the possemen. "No matter what else you do, keep that blankety-blank shotgun sheriff away from me. He ain't human."

Si Bradford was in his office in Eastland when he learned what Turgen had said.

"Tell Santa Claus I promise to keep away from him."

He kept his word. While Turgen, Steele and Burns were in the Cisco jail awaiting trial, the sheriff didn't go near them.

Steele and Burns were placed on trial first. Steele was sentenced to the electric chair and later executed. Burns was sent to the penitentiary for life.

On the day that Santa Claus, alias Billy Turgen, was to be brought into court for sentencing, he grabbed a guard's gun, shot him dead and escaped. He was at large for only a

few hours before irate Cisco citizens caught up with him a few miles out of town.

They decided that too much time had already been wasted, and he was strung up on the nearest telephone pole.

Shortly after Turgen was lynched, Si Bradford became marshal at Strawn, several miles east of Cisco. Although he always intended to search for the loot that the bandits buried at the end of the old cattle trail, approximately eight miles west of Cisco and three miles south of U.S. 80, somehow he was always too busy.

Like many other outlaw troves throughout the Southwest, the loot of the Turgen gang is still buried where the world's meanest Santa Claus cached it.

CHAPTER 12

Jesse James' Two Million Dollars

The name "Jesse Woodson James" has a solid, reputable sound, one that might well be associated with a peaceful, church-going citizen and a credit to the community.

Leave out the middle name, however, and "Jesse James" becomes a sinister figure, the very synonym for audacious, ruthless banditry. No outlaw is reputed to have buried more loot during the post-Civil War era.

Some of Jesse's minor caches have been dug up from time to time. One of them, $38,650. in gold coin, was found in 1938 near Chickasha, Oklahoma, by a professional treasure hunter, Ford Terrill.

But this is hardly even pin money compared to Jesse's biggest hoard, some two million dollars in gold bullion, which still remains where it was buried on March 5, 1876, in the vicinity of Cement, now a town of a thousand persons. It is located on U.S. 277, in south central Oklahoma.

Jesse was born in Clay County, Missouri, on September 5, 1847. At the outbreak of the Civil War the home of his parents, who were Southern sympathizers, was pillaged by Union troops. As a result of this experience, at the age of fifteen, Jesse joined the guerrillas of William C. Quantrell, whose merciless sacking of Lawrence and other towns is one of the grimmest pages in Kansas—or even in all American—history.

Jesse participated in a number of their raids. He was a crack shot and absolutely fearless. He was also a cold-blooded killer, despite the fact that he has been glamorized and romanticized by some writers. He fitted in very well with Quantrell's murderous force and soon became one of its leaders.

At the end of the war Jesse surrendered with most of

Quantrell's men and for an all-too-brief period he settled down. Very soon something happened—he was shot and severely wounded. According to some accounts it was in a fight over a woman; according to others it was during a card game when he caught a professional gambler cheating; still others have it that he was drilled by a bullet in a saloon brawl.

Whatever the reason, when he recovered, he turned badman. He recruited a gang of outlaws which included his elder brother, Frank, and embarked on a notorious career of daring bank robberies and train holdups. Governor Crittenden of Missouri offered a reward of $10,000., for Jesse James—dead or alive. By 1876 James and his gang had accumulated millions in loot.

The largest haul was made in late February, 1876, just south of the border near El Paso. The participants, in addition to Jesse and Frank, included Cole Younger, Frank Miller, Rub Busse, Bud Dalton, George Payne, Roy Baxter, George Overton, Charley Jones and Mach Smith, all veteran members of the James gang.

They ambushed a packtrain of eighteen burros carrying two million dollars in gold bullion, killed the Mexican guards and drivers, then drove the loaded burros across the border and headed northward in freezing weather.

They kept on going through Texas, heading into the lawless Indian Territory that later became Oklahoma and, on March 4, made camp on Cache Creek. Here they debated what to do with the gold bullion plus an undetermined amount they had been carrying since a previous raid. All this wealth was much too heavy to transport by any means other than packtrain. Not only did the eighteen burros slow them down, but inevitably the branded animals would arouse suspicion.

The outlaws decided to bury their plunder, turn the burros loose and burn the pack saddles. Jesse and Frank selected the site together. It was "a two hours' burro walk away from the creek."

On the following morning an objection was raised by Cole Younger. He wanted what he called "a testimony" before the loot was buried.

"No telling when we'll be back to dig it up, nor how many of us there'll be," he said. "Right now is a good time

for all of us to bear witness that we're each entitled to a share."

Jesse agreed that this was a prudent suggestion. He picked up an old brass bucket and with his knife he scratched on the outer surface the name of every man present.

"Frank and I will bury this bucket," he said. "It bears witness to everyone entitled to a share. Anyone who tries to sneak back later to dig up the cache without telling the others will answer to Frank and me."

The burros were driven to the selected site at the head of a small arroyo guarded by a single cottonwood tree. Here the treasure was placed in a large hole which was then filled with earth and topped by several rocks.

Jesse surveyed the result and shook his head.

"We'll spread the rock around more," he said. "This way it looks like a monument or maybe a grave and will attract the attention of anyone passing by."

The rocks covering the cache were moved around to present a more natural appearance. Jesse then hammered a burro shoe into the base of the cottonwood for a marker.

At his order the other members of the gang, with the exception of his brother, led the burros several hundred yards away, removed the pack saddles and drove the animals off to shift for themselves.

While the saddles were being burned he and Frank buried the brass bucket in the vicinity of the cottonwood, at a site which they did not disclose.

In the course of the next six years, the James gang continued its lawless activities far and wide. The law, accidental death, illness and other causes all took a toll. One of the members who "disappeared" was Cole Younger, who was apprehended and sentenced to twenty-five years in prison following a daring bank robbery in Northfield, Minnesota.

Among the newer members were two brothers, Robert and Charles Ford. On April 3, 1882, they visited Jesse in the James home at St. Joseph, Missouri, and treacherously shot him to death in order to claim the $10,000. reward offered by Governor Crittenden. The story, and the song about "The dirty little coward," which has become a folk-

ballad, are so well known that it is needless to repeat them here.

Frank surrendered shortly after the sudden demise of his brother. He was never brought to trial, and he ultimately purchased a 160 acre farm, two miles north of Fletcher, Oklahoma, where he settled down with his wife, Ann, to spend the declining years of his life. He died in 1915 at the age of 72.

Should you happen to be a dedicated believer in the *Encyclopedia Britannica,* you will find that the facts differ somewhat from its assertion that Frank James' last years "were spent quietly on a farm in Missouri."

Actually the farm he bought near Fletcher in 1907, as may be seen on any map of Oklahoma, is situated on U.S. 277, only eleven miles due south of Cement. It was his strategic headquarters for his efforts to retrieve the two million dollars in gold bullion.

There had been vast changes in the terrain of Oklahoma during his long absence. Land had been homesteaded by lottery and by "runs"—races for a claim begun at a specific time. The most famous of these runs was the one to the Cherokee Outlet in 1893.

Frank found that land he remembered as wild had been settled; trees had been cut; ground had been plowed for farms; many familiar landmarks had disappeared.

In the course of his long hunt for the treasure, he wore out at least half a dozen horses. There is no question that he was in the vicinity of the cache a number of times and in some instances rode right over it! Yet in all those years he never discovered it.

One other member of the James gang is known to have searched for the cache. When Cole Younger was released from the penitentiary, he, too, returned to Oklahoma and remained for a long while in Lawton, twenty-five miles from Cement.

Younger and Frank James may have combined their efforts, for at times they were observed by settlers as they rode, apparently aimlessly, through the countryside around Cement in a spring wagon equipped with a pick and shovel.

These journeys aroused more than casual interest among three men: a physician, Dr. Wilbur Knee, and two farmers,

Addams and Pierson. The three of them got together and undertook their own treasure hunt.

Some miles from Cement they found the skeleton of a burro which, they decided, had been one of the eighteen driven off when the treasure was buried. Continuing to search, they came to a small, rocky arroyo. At one end stood the decaying stump of a cottonwood; near its base they discovered an imbedded burro shoe.

They dug in feverish excitement. Addams' pick struck something wooden. Tree roots. They dug deeper and encountered only hardpan. They selected another likely-looking spot, this one several feet from the stump. They dug again. And again, nothing.

They returned to the site many times to probe and dig. Ultimately they abandoned the hunt in discouragement.

Among the many treasure hunters who have sought the trove since then, the closest to finding it was Deputy Sheriff Joe Hunter of Rush Springs.

In 1931 he began to search for it in his free time. He found the small arroyo and the imbedded burro shoe without difficulty. By this time their location was fairly common knowledge in the area.

Weeks later he received his first encouragement when he dug up an old, short-handled prospector's pick several hundred yards from the arroyo. Nearby, he subsequently found the charred frames of eighteen pack saddles. Some were partly exposed to view. Others were scant inches below ground, buried by the force of strong, dust-carrying winds, not by man.

After several more months of methodical searching, he dug up an iron tea kettle fifty yards closer to the cottonwood stump. Prying open the rusted lid, with shaking hands he poured out the contents: some $5,000. worth of gold coins, two pearl brooches, a gold locket set with a large ruby, a French five franc coin dated 1811, one U.S. penny dated 1841, and an old silver-cased watch.

On the reverse side of the watch was the engraved name of the owner, "Theodore Studley" and stamped below was the name of the manufacturer, "New York Watch Co., Springfield, Mass."

From the variety of objects, both masculine and feminine, Hunter deduced that they were the spoils of one

of Jesse's lesser holdups—probably taken from the passengers of a stagecoach. He reasoned that Jesse had been carrying them in his saddlebags as he was riding north from Mexico and that he had buried them close to but apart from the bullion.

Certain that he must be getting close to the trove, Hunter continued to search. More than two years were to pass before he unearthed the most conclusive evidence of the burial of the bullion—the brass bucket!

The "testimony" demanded by Cole Younger fifty-seven years before was still discernible on the outer surface. Prefacing the names of the gang members who had participated in the holdup of the burro train, the point of Jesse's knife had scratched the words: "On this, the 5 day of March, 1876, we whose names appear do bear witness one to the other."

Beneath the names Jesse had also scratched the outline of a grave, a cross, a pack burro and a burro's shoe with an arrow pointing away from the shoe. Stamped on the bottom of the bucket was the maker's name, "E. Miller and Co., Patented 16 December, 1851."

The drawing of the grave puzzled Hunter, for there were none in the vicinity. He decided that it was a pictograph for the word "burial." The pack burro represented the packtrain of gold, the burro's shoe was the landmark on the cottonwood stump.

As for the arrow—this was the enigma. Obviously it pointed away from the stump towards the cache and it pointed to the right. But how far? Jesse had not indicated the number of feet.

For several years thereafter Joe Hunter continued seeking for the treasure. Confident that he was close to it, he was still searching for it in 1948 when he was interviewed for a feature story.

"I'm going to find that two million dollars before I die!" he told the reporter who came from Tulsa to visit him.

But Joe Hunter never did. He passed on quietly sometime early in the 1950s without unearthing Jesse James' biggest trove. Nor, to this day, has anyone else.

CHAPTER 13

Tom Sing's $780,000. War Against The United States

On a beautiful October morning in 1875, residents of Monterey, California, witnessed a sight whose like had never before been observed in American waters, nor has it been since.

Seven stately Chinese war junks, each eighty feet in length, were framed between the wide headlands of the bay, advancing in a line.

Carved in their high bows were fierce wooden eyes. Painted in reds and yellows to frighten off the demons of unknown seas, the eyes glared balefully at Monterey.

The sixty-five-foot mast of each junk was set with three batwing sails of shiny yellow mats, decorated with gilded good luck charms and topped with the flying battle flags of the Imperial Chinese Navy.

On the deck of the *Courageous Eagle,* flagship of the fleet, stood Admiral Tau Yet Sung, War Lord of the Seas. He had sailed his junks across the Pacific at the order of the Dowager Empress Tzu Hsi of China. Her stern and implacable orders were:

"You will invade the United States and capture the city of Monterey. You will seek out our subject, Tom Sing, and assist him in the recovery of all gold stolen from him and his fellow subjects of China. If this fails, you will then exact compensation from the United States government."

Now, many months after sailing from Tientsin with two hundred and sixty-five men, fifty shiny brass cannon and a large assortment of broadswords and trade cutlasses, Admiral Tau had invaded Estero Bay. At a range of one-third of a mile he gave the order to fire at the city of Monterey.

A lighted pine torch was applied to the fuse in the breech of the ten-pounder in the bow of the *Courageous Eagle.* A

round cannonball whistled through the air, harmlessly dropping into the calm water several yards from the old customhouse, where a crowd of *paisano* fishermen, storekeepers and ranchers had gathered.

"Hey, Marshal!" someone called out delightedly. "They're saluting us!"

Deputy U.S. Marshal Harlan Wenzel was a cautious, slow-speaking six-footer. He eyed the widening ripples in the water where the cannonball had landed.

"I'm not so sure," he deliberated. "Seems to me they whanged at us."

"It was a firecracker, Marshal," laughed Jim Loughran, owner of the feed store. "Like they shoot off in 'Frisco on the Chinese New Year. They're celebrating their safe arrival."

Wenzel scratched his graying head dubiously. He was a veteran of the Civil War and he recognized a cannon shot when he heard and saw one.

Only one man in Monterey knew what it was all about, a small Chinese who was watching silently among the spectators. Tom Sing was a stoopshouldered, forty-four-year-old cook working in the kitchen of Sam Tomasino's Eating House. He had been suffering great loss of face since $780,000. in gold, his own earnings as well as those of many of his fellows, had been stolen from him.

Sing had originally come to the United States with hundreds of other Chinese contract-laborers to work on the Union Pacific Railroad. He had been a cook for railroad construction gangs from West Las Animas to Pueblo on the Colorado and New Mexico Railroad and on the Los Angeles-Salt Lake Line of the Union Pacific.

All the time Sing and his fellow countrymen carefully kept their pigtails because without them they would not be allowed to re-enter China. They hoarded just as carefully their wages, which they hoped to take back to their homeland with them.

They insisted upon being paid in new gold coins. When they received their wages, the coins were placed in a small bag and patiently shaken for hours at a time. This tedious operation ultimately produced a small amount of gold dust in the bottom of the bag. The gold dust paid for their frugal necessities. Each Chinese then hid his coins in the ground

against the day when he either would be moved elsewhere with his gang, or his contract would expire and he would return to China.

There was a serious flaw in this system. It wasn't very long before white railroad laborers and outsiders—mule skinners, trappers, cowhands and soldiers who happened to be stationed in the area—began to engage in hunts for "Chink gold." Hundreds of the small caches were located and dug up, and many a Chinese laborer had his entire savings stolen.

Tom Sing was one. After his cache was robbed, he decided sadly that there would be no purpose in returning to China. He would have to start saving all over again and it would be several years before he would have enough to take with him to his homeland.

Instead he made his way to the West Coast. In Monterey he became a cook in a *paisano* restaurant in the south end of town. The owner, Sam Tomasino, was a diamond in the rough who took a liking to the little Chinese. Besides wages, Tom Sing was allowed to live in a small shack behind the restaurant.

Tom Sing had resolved that he never again would bury money in the ground. Nor did he put his trust in banks. With his very first wages he bought an old but durable iron safe which he installed in his shack. It was a much bigger safe than he could fill in a lifetime of cooking but it was the only one he could buy for fifteen dollars.

Then he had an idea. There was plenty of room in his safe for the money of other Chinese. Instead of hiding their wages in the ground the railroad laborers, for a small fee, could deposit them in his safe and be freed from worry about being robbed.

He went to the local office of the California Stage Company which carried gold shipments to the railroad camps. There he was informed that the company was willing to carry the wages of workmen back to Monterey on return trips.

The plan proved successful from the start. Tom Sing had a reputation for scrupulous honesty. The word soon spread not only to railroad camps but to mining towns where Chinese laborers were employed. More and more of them sent their wages to him for safekeeping. Although he

continued cooking for Sam Tomasino, he was also in the banking business, in a way. He received a small fee for each deposit and paid his depositors no interest. In the course of five years $780,000. in gold accumulated in his big safe.

It was at this time that three notorious San Francisco bank robbers—Paul Downs, Luke Sheridan, and Ramo Lusuto—learned about Tom Sing's unique "bank."

Downs, the leader, came down to Monterey from San Francisco and ate lunch and supper at Tomasino's restaurant in order to case the layout.

"Easy as sucking eggs," he reported to his confederates. "Just one little heathen Chinee cook alone in the shack with all that money."

The robbery proved as easy as Paul Downs had said. On the morning of February 5, 1874, at approximately 2 A.M., Downs and Lusuto entered the cook's shack with drawn guns while Sheridan waited outside in an open wagon hitched to a team of horses.

Tom Sing was sound asleep. He was awakened and gagged and bound. The heavy safe was rolled outside the door where strong planks had been set in place against the wagon's tailgate. The safe was hoisted up on the wagon with pulleys and covered with a tarpaulin.

The trio drove a few miles southward towards Carmel, then headed east in the direction of the Salinas River following an old cattle trail.

It was almost daylight when they reached the river at a point about midway between Chualar and Gonzales, two small towns six miles apart. (The towns are now connected by the superhighway, U.S. 101.)

They halted the wagon in a stand of pines a few hundred yards from the bank of the river, rolled out the safe and made preparations to blast it open. In addition to dynamite they had brought with them jute bags into which they intended to transfer the loot, and digging tools to bury the filled bags.

The operation was progressing smoothly and they were preparing to set off the dynamite when they heard the bellow of cattle several hundred yards upstream. A rancher and his cowhands were watering the stock.

The cattlemen were in no hurry to leave. The bandits

had to wait quietly among the trees for a long time before the herd moved off.

Again the trio got ready to dynamite the safe and again they were interrupted. This time it was four Mexicans en route to a fiesta in Salinas, who paused to water their horses.

"No telling who'll be along next," said Downs. "Anyone who does is sure to hear the blast and start looking around for the reason."

He decided to change their plans. Lusuto was to drive the empty wagon on to Chualar, abandon it and purchase three saddle horses. In the meantime Downs and Sheridan would dig a hole in the ground amid the trees and bury the safe with its contents intact. The gold would be retrieved at some future time.

When Lusuto returned later that evening, riding a fine horse and leading two others, Downs and Sheridan were waiting for him.

"Damned good stock," Downs approved. "How much did you have to pay for 'em?"

"Nothing." A grin appeared on Lusuto's face. "Whole bunch of horses were in the corral behind the livery stable. I picked three of the best."

"You *stole* em?" Downs was appalled by this monumental piece of stupidity. "Lusuto, you're a goddamned fool!"

It was too late to do anything else but flee. The irate citizens of Chualar had already formed a posse and were preparing to go after them. All they could do was to run.

They galloped southward and dashed through Gonzales without drawing rein. They spurred their tiring horses on, heading across unfamiliar terrain. They headed for the wilds of the Call Mountains and blundered into a blind canyon.

It was there that the Chualar posse, augmented by sundry citizens from Gonzales, caught up with them on the following day. There was a brief gun battle before Downs, Lusuto and Sheridan surrendered. They were lynched on the spot as horse thieves. Not one of them said a word about the Monterey robbery.

As for the victim, Tom Sing, at 6:30 A.M. on the day he was robbed he did not appear in the kitchen as usual to stoke up the wood stove for his daily cooking.

At seven o'clock Sam Tomasino went into the shack to find out why. He discovered Tom Sing, removed the gag, cut the ropes from his wrists and ankles. The two of them then sought out Deputy U.S. Marshal Wenzel to whom Tom Sing told his story.

Wenzel listened sympathetically and then he asked questions. Had the cook ever seen the robbers before? Only one of them, Tom Sing answered. A few days before the robbery a stranger had had lunch and supper in the restaurant. He was one of the pair who later entered the shack, tied up Tom Sing and made off with the safe.

Wenzel was a conscientious lawman. He traced the trio of robbers to the bank of the Salinas River and in the nearby woods he came upon an abandoned pick and shovel. In Chualar he found the team and wagon ditched by Lusuto and learned about the lynching of the horse thieves. The descriptions of two of them, Downs and Lusuto, tallied with those given to him by Tom Sing.

Other than the pick and shovel, however, Wenzel did not find a clue to the safe and its contents.

He questioned the leader of the lynching party, a cattle dealer named Gene Lodge. Had any of them anything to say before being swung?

"What could they say beside a quick prayer?" Lodge shrugged his shoulders. "We caught 'em with the rustled horses."

"Maybe being so fast to hang 'em will cost a lot of Chinese about three-quarters of a million dollars," Wenzel commented, more in sorrow than in anger.

He rode back to Monterey and broke the news to Tom Sing. He suggested organizing a search party to hunt for the safe on the bank of the Salinas River.

Tom Sing said he would look for the safe alone and pleaded with Wenzel to keep news of the robbery quiet. He would suffer great loss of face if his countrymen learned about it.

Wenzel pointed out that he had to make an official report, but he agreed that as far as the town was concerned he would maintain secrecy. The only other resident of Monterey who knew about the big robbery was Sam Tomasino and he, too, pledged his silence.

Tom Sing journeyed alone to the Salinas. He dug in

likely spots for several days without finding the safe.

He returned to Monterey, having decided to tell other Chinese about the robbery despite the resultant loss of face. Some of them certainly would aid him in a second, more methodical hunt.

He sent word to fellow countrymen who had lost their savings in the robbery, and a number of them did participate with him in a search. However, it was delayed for more than a month because of abnormally heavy rains and the flooding of the Salinas River.

The river overflowed its banks in a wide area. When the water receded it deposited a layer of silt wherever it had reached, obliterating landmarks.

This was the ultimate blow to Tom Sing. He pledged to his fellow countrymen that he would never leave the region. If he could not find the safe he would repay their losses from his own wages. In proof of his sincerity he solemnly cut off his queue—which meant he never again would be permitted to enter China.

His intentions were of the best but when he did some simple figuring on his abacus he realized it would take him a long time to repay $780,000. from his ten dollars a month wages—about 6,500 years!

He brooded over this, hoping to find a better solution, and one day it came to him. The United States government was responsible for his great sorrow and loss of face because it permitted robbers to plunder innocent, hardworking Chinese. Therefore the government should be forced to make restitution.

There was only one way in which this might be done. He would appeal to the all-powerful Dowager Empress Tzu Hsi of China to help him and his fellow countrymen.

It was weeks before Tom Sing could summon up the temerity to write to the Empress but when he did he suggested that inasmuch as the robbery had occurred in Monterey, perhaps Monterey should be captured and held by the Chinese fleet or army until the U.S. government repaid the money.

"Divine Dowager Empress Tzu Hsi, Regent of All China, Protectress of all Loyal Subjects in the Lands Beyond the Seas," he wrote with a brush in careful ideographs.

"I, Tom Sing, the bones of whose honorable ancestors lie in peace in the Valley of the Third Hill of Canton, supplicate you for assistance and beseech you to send a great fleet of invincible war junks to the American Province of Monterey to right the wrongs of many of your loyal subjects."

Tom Sing's letter arrived at the Imperial Palace in Peking sometime late in 1874. By slow and ceremonious stages it passed from one official to another until finally, in the spring of 1875, it was brought to the attention of the fiery old Empress Tzu Hsi.

She read it indignantly. It rekindled an old anger within her.

For several years following the California gold rush of 1849 and the westward expansion of the railroads the Chinese "contract laborers" who came to the United States had been badly treated. The Empress had finally summoned U.S. Minister Anson Burlingame to the palace and insisted that our government sign a treaty guaranteeing fair treatment to Chinese in the United States.

The treaty had gone into effect in 1867-1868, but complaints had continued. Tom Sing's letter was the final straw. The Empress ordered a war fleet to sail for Monterey. . . .

As the crowd of spectators at the old customhouse grew, Ben Mossman, the town barber, received the news and hurried from his shop to his home to don his Sunday clothes. Besides being barber and undertaker, Mossman was the town orator. It was he who made the official speech at a funeral, wedding, Fourth of July celebration and lynching.

Suitably attired, he hurried to the waterfront and sought out U.S. Deputy Marshal Wenzel.

"Monterey is greatly honored by this visit from the Chinese Navy," he said. "It is a historic tribute to our growing metropolis. They'll all turn green with envy in Redwood and Frisco when they hear about it. What we should do right quick is form a reception committee, organize a parade, arrange for an ox-roast."

"All right," Wenzel agreed, relieved to have this unprecedented international problem taken off his hands. "You're elected."

On board the *Courageous Eagle,* Admiral Tau was com-

pletely mystified. There had been no reply to his challenging cannon fire and from what he was able to observe, the Americans on shore were neither making preparations for battle nor getting ready to flee. He finally decided that the sight of his invincible battle fleet struck such terror to their hearts that they wanted to surrender without a fight.

He ordered his barge lowered over the stern. Surrounded by a guard of twenty-four sailors displaying bare cutlasses, he was rowed to the customhouse.

When he set foot on shore the blonde daughter of Steve Knowlton, proprietor of the Midway Saloon, presented him with a bunch of roses. The admiral accepted the bouquet with a curt nod, thinking to himself that this was a curious manner of surrendering.

Then Ben Mossman's voice boomed in a flood of oratory and the admiral turned to his interpreter with a frown.

"What is their spokesman saying? Is he supplicating me to spare his city?"

The interpreter's translation was sketchy. He had only a vague idea of what Mossman was talking about.

"He says, August War Lord of the Seas, that the city of Monterey is yours without further fighting. Tonight your victory is to be commemorated by a great parade and feast, in accordance with their custom."

The admiral held up his hand. This homage to the conqueror could wait. First he would carry out the orders of the empress.

"Summon the one who is named Tom Sing!"

Wenzel spotted the cook in the crowd. Tom Sing approached the admiral hesitantly.

"Point out the robbers who have stolen the gold from you and all the others!" the admiral ordered sternly.

Tom Sing explained that the robbers had been executed for other grievous sins but that the gold they had stolen had not been found.

"Then," declared the admiral, "I shall hold the city of Monterey until the government of the United States makes full restitution!"

There never was a more peaceful occupation of a city nor a more curious international misunderstanding.

That night there was a torchlight parade in which the sailors of the Imperial Chinese Fleet and the citizens of

Monterey participated. Admiral Tau rode in the lead carriage accompanied by U.S. Deputy Marshal Wenzel, Ben Mossman, Tom Sing and, at his request, his friend and benefactor, Sam Tomasino.

This was followed by an ox-roast. At the conclusion Admiral Tau made a ceremonious speech. He complimented the citizens of Monterey for having capitulated so peacefully, informed them that he would dispatch a letter to the American government on the following day and assured them that the city would be returned to them as soon as the $780,000. in gold arrived from the U.S. Treasury in Washington, D.C.

Admiral Tau sent his courier, a Captain Mai, and his interpreter, to Washington, D.C. On the following day they boarded the stagecoach for San Francisco—where they decided to desert. They never returned to Monterey.

The seven war junks remained anchored in Estero Bay, and the admiral waited. His knowledge of the geography of the United States was vague and he thought that his courier would be back within a few days. He relieved the monotony of waiting by occasionally going ashore where he was invariably courteously treated.

With the passing of the days Admiral Tau gradually learned the true situation. At first he was morbid and depressed. The irascible dowager empress invariably ordered the beheading of her war lords if they failed to carry out instructions to the letter.

Then Admiral Tau began to feel better and made some plans of his own. One day, after collecting all the gold coins and transportable valuables of his battle fleet in two bags, he had himself rowed ashore. He, too, boarded a stage for San Francisco. It was the last that was ever heard of him.

Following his departure, the sailors began to venture ashore. With the admiral gone there seemed less and less likelihood of the fleet sailing back to China, and most of them seemed relieved. The voyage to Monterey had taken months, during which they had endured hunger and thirst, stormy seas and diseases which had caused seventy-one deaths. They had been dreading the return voyage.

Some of them obtained jobs as fishermen and sailors aboard the many craft in the harbor, and their descendants

may be found in Monterey to this day. Others, more venturesome, found their way to San Francisco, and to jobs in the mining and railroad camps.

Tom Sing remained in Monterey. He continued to work for the understanding Sam Tomasino and he occasionally took time off to search the bank of the Salinas River for his buried safe containing $780,000. He never found it.

The seven abandoned war junks swung at anchor in the bay for a long time. Ultimately they either sank or were driven ashore by storms and broken up for firewood by the citizens of Monterey. They were the last tangible reminder to Tom Sing of the fortune in gold that was stolen from him and his fellow countrymen and that is still missing.

CHAPTER 14

Shipwrecked Treasure of the Dunes

Staring off to port through the darkness of a stormy November night, Captain Edmund Scoville, skipper of the British freighter *Florence,* observed a reassuring light bobbing slowly southward.

"Probably a Yankee coaster or fishing craft," he said to helmsman Matt Olmstead and heaved a sigh of relief. "Hold steady to your course."

"Aye, aye, steady as she goes," Olmstead responded.

Captain Scoville had been worrying for the past hour. The *Florence,* bound for Liverpool, had sailed from Vera Cruz several days before with a mixed cargo in her hold and $300,000. in gold bars, consigned to the Bank of England, stowed in the captain's cabin.

After taking on an additional shipment of turpentine at Charleston, S.C., she was plowing through stormy waters off Cape Hatteras and beating her way up the treacherous coast towards her departure point for crossing the Atlantic.

The skipper had been summoned to the bridge when helmsman Olmstead and First Mate Andrew Conyers failed to raise Diamond Shoals Light. Now, after anxious watching, Captain Scoville had sighted the bobbing light and concluded that it was a vessel under way between his own ship and the Outer Banks, a long, narrow strip of sandy land stretching along the North Carolina shore.

Convinced that the *Florence* was further out at sea, and had a greater margin of safety than he had first believed, the skipper returned to his cabin and his interrupted sleep.

Approximately an hour later the *Florence* ran aground in the boiling shoals a few miles south of Nag's Head. Officers and crew took to the lifeboats, which were either

swamped or overturned by huge waves. All thirty-one of them were drowned.

Boats rowed by sturdy Bankers put out for the partly submerged ship on the following day, when the raging sea had somewhat subsided. She was boarded, and that part of the cargo not under water was brought to shore and divided among the Bankers.

The gold bars were removed from the skipper's cabin, neatly wrapped and tied in old sailcloth and buried in a twenty-foot-high sand dune near Kitty Hawk.

With the passing of time the *Florence* was pounded to pieces by the fury of Atlantic storms. What was left of her sank to the bottom of the shoals, to join many other ships which had strayed, or been lured, off their course to the "graveyard of the Atlantic."

No one today knows for sure how many unsuspecting sea captains ran their vessels ashore or aground on the quicksand-bottomed shoals, decoyed by the trick which gave Nag's Head its name.

The trick was simple, ingenious and effective. On dark nights Bankers fastened a lighted lantern to a horse's neck and led the animal along the shore. Like Captain Scoville, many a helmsman and officer on watch on passing ships mistook the bobbing of the lantern for the motion of another vessel off-shore.

Luring ships aground, "salvaging" their cargoes and hiding whatever treasure was found aboard was an old and pious practice of the clannish inhabitants of the Outer Banks.

Nor is the word "pious" used in sarcasm, for the idea was originated by members of the congregation of Starr Methodist Church in the village of Straits, in Carteret County—according to local legends.

The winter of 1813 was one of the most severe in the history of the Outer Banks. There had been a crop-killing drought the previous summer, and when the winter set in, the waters of Albemarle and Pamlico Sounds froze so solidly that Bankers were unable to fish. Furthermore a British blockade made it impossible for them to sail their boats out into the Atlantic.

Confronted by the specter of starvation the Bankers gathered in church and Parson Starr prayed: "If it be pre-

destined that there be a shipwreck on the Atlantic coast, please let it be Thy Will that it happen here!"

So it did, a few days later. The British schooner *Havelock* ran aground. Not only did she have a cargo of flour that averted starvation, but in the captain's cabin locker was an army payroll of $16,500., more than enough for the Bankers to buy seeds for the spring planting.

Providence had been kind to the despairing Bankers. Some of them resolved that in the future they would give Providence a helping hand.

In subsequent years, there was a perceptible increase in the number of ships running onto the shoals. Not all of them sank out of sight. Some grounded in shallow water. Among these were the *USS Huron,* wrecked in November, 1877, with a loss of a hundred and eight lives, and the British tramp, *Ariosto,* wrecked in December, 1899.

Some, like the *George W. Wells,* first six-masted schooner ever built, were driven ashore. She met her fate in a gale in 1913.

One of the most curious wrecks, and certainly one which the Bankers did not decoy, was an ancient Elizabethan warship known as a "crumpster," which is believed to have been an escort ship during the settlement of Sir Walter Raleigh's Roanoke Island colony in 1587. After being imprisoned on the shoal bottom for centuries, she was released by the powerful, undermining tide during the September, 1944, hurricane and the wind then drove her up on the beach.

The Bankers cached "salvaged" treasure in the dunes for many years. It has been estimated that they secreted millions of dollars worth of gold and silver coins, gold bars, plate, jewelry and other valuables during the nineteenth century. Among the repositories were Kill Devil, The Seven Sisters, Jockey's Ridge and Engagement Ridge.

The Bankers were secretive as well as clannish. When, as occasionally happened, a visitor chanced to find a gold coin while wandering among the dunes, he got nowhere by asking questions. If he persisted, he was informed that the Outer Banks were considerably north of pirate country and furthermore the date on the coin was conclusive proof that it was not from a pirate hoard.

Thus, for a long, long time, few if any visitors from the

"mainland" thought of searching for buried treasure on the Outer Banks.

In 1929 a retired army engineer, William H. Kindervater, arrived at Nag's Head on a mission. A massive granite pylon was to be erected at nearby Kitty Hawk to commemorate the historic first flight of the Wright brothers.

As a preliminary it was decided to survey dune formation and to determine if erosion could be prevented. Constant winds picked up sand particles and blew them westward, causing the dunes to "travel."

Several experts took part in this investigation. One of them was Dr. Paul Meredith who had made a somewhat similar investigation in Denmark where he had ascertained that the dunes "traveled" between fifteen and twenty-four feet annually.

When Meredith took measurements at Kill Devil he was astounded to find that in a span of twenty-six years, beginning at the time of the first flight of the Wright brothers in 1903, the dune had "moved" more than a quarter of a mile westward towards Albemarle Sound.

Nor was this all he discovered. Approximately seventy-five yards from the base of the Atlantic, or windward, side of the dune his foot scuffed a shiny object in the sand. When he dug it up it proved to be the large, handsomely engraved silver punch bowl presented to the officers' wardroom of the *USS Huron* at the time of her launching.

Meredith pointed out to Kindervater that the warship had been wrecked in November, 1877, in the worst disaster in U.S. Navy history up to that time.

"If we can assume that the punch bowl was hidden in the dune soon afterwards this means that in the ensuing fifty-two years the dune has retreated a considerable distance from the site where the punch bowl was buried," he declared.

This interested Kindervater and Meredith mostly from a scientific standpoint, but when news of the discovery reached the mainland it created excitement of a different sort.

The excitement was heightened soon afterward when a retired sea captain, Jefferson Hayman of Roanoke Island,

uncovered another shiny object nearby—the *USS Huron*'s silver sugar bowl.

Now old stories and rumors about treasure buried in the dunes were revived, and there was an influx of visitors to the Outer Banks. They roamed the dunes with spades and one of them, Lawrence Prescott of Richmond, Virginia, dug up two gold bars and a piece of tattered sailcloth near the base of a dune in the vicinity of Kitty Hawk.

It was believed that this was a small part of the $300,000. "salvaged" from the *Florence*. The fact that Prescott's find was not made in the dune but in the sand near it again emphasized the "traveling" of the dunes. Although some of them originally had been caches, the treasure they had hidden now was covered only by a comparatively shallow layer of sand.

In June, 1948, Norman and Jill Cowan, a young couple from Newark, N.J., were honeymooning at Nag's Head when they added another time dimension to the treasure potentialities of the Outer Banks.

The Cowans were strolling on the beach near Oregon Inlet when they found several silver dollars cast up by the tide. Most of them had been minted in the early 1940s. One, bearing the date of 1852, was subsequently sold to a coin dealer for $965.

About a month later more silver coins minted in the late 1930s and early 1940s were found on the beach together with a cigarette lighter that had been manufactured in 1939.

The coins and lighter obviously had been washed ashore from a ship wrecked after 1939—but what ship?

Although Outer Bankers had long since abandoned the quaint custom of decoying vessels into the imprisoning shoals, the fury of Hatteras storms has not abated. Besides natural hazards, a number of ships were sunk in this area by German U-boats and floating mines during World War II.

During four appalling months from January through April, 1942, there were forty-one such sinkings officially listed. Among them were tankers—for example, the *Ario, Tenas* and *Dixie Arrow*—freighters and cargo vessels including the *Liberator, Brazos* and *Caribsea.*

Oceanographers explain that the relentless action of tide, wind, wave and occasional gale or hurricane will, in time, force many of these submerged vessels to disgorge some of their contents and valuables—if, indeed, the entire wreck is not driven ashore as occurred with the sixteenth century crumpster.

Thus, besides the earlier and intentional caches that are still provocatively abundant and undiscovered on the Outer Banks, many resulting from the forces of nature may be cast there throughout the years, perhaps the centuries, to come.

CHAPTER 15

The Million Dollar Murder Trial of John Dillinger

In May, 1933, a tall, thin twenty-nine-year-old convict with brownish-red hair and tight, thin lips, was paroled from Indiana State Prison after serving eight-and-a-half years of two concurrent sentences for assault and battery and conspiracy to commit a felony.

In the course of the following fifteen months, John Herbert Dillinger and his kill-crazy pals murdered ten men, wounded a number of others, staged three jail breaks, raided three police arsenals, robbed several midwestern banks. They squirreled away more than a million dollars in cash, of which only $25,000. has ever been recovered.

Dillinger's first bank job, the State Bank in the heart of Indianapolis, did not pay off despite meticulous planning. In fact it threatened to end his spectacular career before it had fairly begun.

He planned the robbery with another ex-con, a twenty-six-year-old pal named Homer Van Meter, who was a bit over five feet tall, always wore a cherubic expression on his round face and appeared as guileless as a well-brought-up high school student.

After casing the bank Dillinger and Van Meter decided that they would need help, and their thoughts turned to four other prison pals: Russell Clark, John "Three-Finger Jack" Hamilton, Harry Pierpont and Harry Makley—the last two were both armed robbery specialists.

The fact that this quartet was still in Indiana State Prison did not faze Dillinger. He knew that they were working in the prison shirt factory. And having himself labored there for five years, he was familiar with both the operations and the suppliers. He had a plan.

In the course of the next few weeks he obtained a job as loader in the Indianapolis thread factory which supplied the prison. He hid four .45 caliber automatics in a crate of thread which was to be shipped to the prison and spattered some black paint on the side of that particular crate. And he then contrived to have a note smuggled to Pierpont in which he gave instructions to pass the word on to the other three cons for all four to be on the alert for the arrival of a crate so bespattered.

The resulting jail break went off smoothly. The quartet took two guards and a sheriff as hostages, stole a car and drove to Indianapolis where they entered a gospel mission near Fountain Square. Here, at gun point, they ordered four derelicts to strip as they shucked their own prison garb. After donning the clothes of the derelicts they disappeared.

The robbery of the State Bank came off as Dillinger had planned. He made his getaway with a considerable amount of cash and drove to a prepared hideout in the apartment of Clark's sister in Dayton, Ohio.

He failed to take into account, however, the manhunting ability of Captain Matt Leach, acting head of the Indiana State Police.

Leach identified Dillinger and Homer Van Meter by the description of the bank tellers. He learned through an informant that Dillinger was hiding out in Dayton. A few days later the Dayton cops broke into the apartment and captured the thoroughly surprised bank robber before he could reach for his gun.

Towards evening, sixteen days later, a car stopped in front of the Lima jail where Dillinger was being held. Four hard-faced characters in new suits walked into the office of Sheriff Jesse Barber. What little talking they did came from Harry Pierpont.

"We're deputies from Michigan City," he announced tersely. "We're here to take Dillinger back to prison for violation of parole."

"All right," the sheriff nodded. "But first I'd like to see your credentials."

"Sure thing." Pierpont's hand went into his suit jacket. "How about these?"

His .45 came quickly out of the shoulder holster. Barber died with a slug between the eyes and two more through the heart.

Pierpont took the cell keys from the sheriff's pocket and freed Dillinger while the others herded the deputy into an empty cell and stood guard.

Now firmly launched on their murderous careers, they sped north to the rundown farm of Pierpont's mother on the outskirts of Leipsic. Long familiar with her son's criminal activities, she was not greatly surprised to see them, but objected on practical grounds to their use of her house for a hideout.

"They'll come here hunting for you, that's for certain," she said.

Dillinger acknowledged that she was probably right.

"Tell you what we'll do. We'll hole up in your barn. We'll dig a place under it where we can hide if the cops show up."

They dug all night and made a fair-sized sub-cellar beneath the floor of the barn, and they craftily camouflaged it with hay.

On the following day the cops, including Matt Leach, did show up. They searched the house and the barn. They did not find the outlaws then, nor on a subsequent surprise visit.

Ma Pierpont furnished the gang with a battery radio and kept them supplied with food and newspapers. Through her Dillinger sent word to Homer Van Meter, whom he knew was hiding out in a Chicago flophouse, to join them at the farm.

A few days after Homer's arrival Dillinger was reading an account of the murder of Sheriff Barber in a Peru, Indiana, newspaper. He chuckled grimly.

"Hey, get this! The Peru cops have received a brand-new supply of Tommy guns in case we should try to pull a bank heist in their burg. You know, those guns could come in handy."

On the following evening he drove to Peru with Homer and Pierpont. They parked near the police station and Homer went inside. He found only one cop on duty, told him he was a tourist and asked directions to Indianapolis.

"A setup!" he informed Dillinger. "Only one cop. And I saw the Tommy guns. Nice and new like the newspaper said."

Homer re-entered the station house, followed by the other two. They held up the surprised cop, locked him in a cell and made off with the entire stock of Tommy guns and ammunition.

Not long afterwards, on October 23, 1933, Dillinger and his pals entered the National Savings and Trust Company in Greencastle, Indiana, with their brand-new Tommy guns. They walked out with $74,382.

Within another month they pyramided this to more than a quarter of a million dollars, robbing banks in Indianapolis, Daleville and Rockville. At this point, since Dillinger had heisted banks which were national institutions and transported the stolen money across state lines, the G-men entered the picture.

There is a popular story to the effect that Dillinger rented at least a dozen mailboxes in post offices in the vicinity of Chicago, all under different names, and that he deposited all but one of the keys in one of the boxes, keeping only the key to that particular box. He then supposedly mailed his loot to the various boxes.

The fallacies can be pointed out: Dillinger did not trust the safety of post-office boxes any more than he did that of banks. A considerable part of his loot, currency in five to one hundred-dollar denominations and negotiable coupon bonds, was bulky. If it failed to arouse the initial suspicion of the postal clerks distributing it into the boxes, it would inevitably have attracted their notice as more and more "shipments" accumulated—Dillinger was away from Chicago for long periods at a stretch and would have been unable to make regular collections.

Furthermore, hunted as he was by the FBI, and with his "wanted" photograph on the wall of every post office, he was by no means inclined to take unnecessary chances of being recognized.

The truth is that he made a number of caches. From time to time he returned to the poorly maintained ten-acre produce farm of his aging father, John Dillinger, Sr., outside of Mooresville, Indiana, where he buried considerable plunder in a corn field and in a potato field. He also made

several of his "deposits" in a cow pasture on Ma Pierpont's farm near Leipsic.

Among his sensational and profitable bank heists, two should be singled out for special mention. In January, 1934, he became interested in the protective potential of a bulletproof vest. He bought one and wore it for the first time when he and his gang held up the First National Bank and Trust Company in East Chicago.

Dillinger was scooping stacks of currency into a suitcase when the cop on the beat, a courageous officer named O'Malley, had a hunch that something wrong was going on within the bank and entered to investigate.

Homer, who was unarmed, spotted the cop first and shouted a warning. Hamilton had lined a dozen customers and tellers against the wall and was keeping his eyes on them. "Three-Finger" Jack was standing behind Dillinger, so positioned that he was unable to use his Tommy gun.

Dillinger grasped the situation fast, pointed his Tommy gun at O'Malley and triggered. Nothing happened. The gun had jammed.

O'Malley coolly aimed at Dillinger's heart and fired his service revolver. Again and again and again. Every bullet penetrated the padding of Dillinger's vest—and was stopped by the steel plating beneath.

Dillinger freed the jam in his Tommy gun. He stitched O'Malley with a long burst from hip to hip. The bullets all but severed the cop's body. Dillinger and his gang then fled with the loot, driving to one of their hideouts, Little Bohemia Lodge, a summer resort about fifty miles north of Rhinelander, Wisconsin. Here they cached $25,000. of their loot in the ground, the only Dillinger hoard that was ever found.

The other noteworthy heist was carried out under unique circumstances in the vaults of the Unity Trust and Savings Bank on West North Avenue, Chicago.

The banking part of this institution no longer was functioning. Although it had recently gone out of business, a sign in the front window explained that the building was still open for the convenience of those customers who had maintained safe-deposit boxes.

It so happened that during the first week in December Dillinger and Harry Makley passed by the bank and read

the sign. They both reacted immediately.

"A cream puff!" Makley grinned.

"We're going to need a torch," said the practical Dillinger.

A day or two later Makley went into the building and cased the safe-deposit section. Posing as the salesman for a manufacturer of electrical alarms, he was pleased to learn from the single guard on duty that there was neither an electrical alarm system in the vault nor was the company disposed to buy one inasmuch as this part of the bank was also going out of business.

Early on the afternoon of December 13, Dillinger entered the bank alone with his Tommy gun. He found the single guard on duty and had him stand against the wall. Homer entered, tied up the guard and went outside again to tell "Three-Finger" Jack, Makley and Pierpont, who were waiting in a car, that the coast was clear.

Each carried a suitcase into the bank. They brought with them an acetylene torch, pry bars, a portable radio tuned to the police band so that they could intercept any alarm—and their lunches.

Dillinger had questioned the tied-up guard and found out that he was to punch a time clock at 3 P.M. If he failed to do so an alarm would go off.

"We'll work until 2:45 and allow ourselves fifteen minutes for a getaway," he told his pals.

They opened safe-deposit boxes systematically, row after row. Dillinger sorted out the contents and packed what they would take with them into the suitcases; $76,000. in cash, $175,000. in negotiable bonds, $300,000. worth of miscellaneous jewelry including diamond rings, earrings, bracelets and necklaces.

At 2:45 P.M. they stopped work, coolly walked out of the bank and put the loaded suitcases into the car. Most of this loot, with the exception of a sum estimated to be about $15,000. or $20,000., was buried in a field on the Mooresville farm. The cash that was held out they decided to spend on a Florida winter vacation.

Instead of purchasing brand-new Cadillacs, which had been Pierpont's suggestion, Dillinger insisted upon two secondhand Ford sedans—they would be much less conspicuous. They would also travel by day, not night, he

added, and act like ordinary tourists. Clark, Makley and Pierpont each took a girl along. Their names are unimportant. The gangsters dropped them soon after the vacation.

Dillinger, however, had acquired an attractive, sexy-looking girl friend, Evelyn Frechette, who was his constant companion for a time.

The eight of them drove to Florida with a considerable amount of luggage including four Tommy guns and several hundred rounds of ammunition—just in case. The guns were used only once, and harmlessly.

They rented a large house fronting the ocean at Daytona Beach.

While G-men and law officers, including the determined Captain Matt Leach, were hunting for them, they relaxed, swam and enjoyed the Florida sunshine.

On New Year's Eve Pierpont and Makley got drunk. They decided to celebrate the holiday by firing several bursts of their Tommy guns at the ocean at midnight. A neighbor complained to the police about the "explosions" he heard on the porch and a patrol car soon appeared.

The two cops in it had no idea that the tall, apologetic winter visitor who talked to them was the notorious John Dillinger. They accepted his explanation that he and his friends had brought several strings of firecrackers with them to see the New Year of 1934 in properly.

Soon afterward Dillinger became restless. He decided to take a trip with Evelyn Frechette. They drove out to the midwest with no particular objective in mind, toured through Nebraska and ultimately went to Tucson, Arizona, because Evelyn had heard it was "a nice place."

They registered at the Congress Hotel and were joined by Clark, Makley, Pierpont and their girl friends.

In Tucson over-confidence made them less cautious; and they were recognized. Dillinger's three pals were captured without a fight. But at that moment Dillinger happened to be off on one of his rides with Evelyn. They learned of the arrests from their car radio. At once the headed for Chicago, only to run into a police roadblock. With a formidable assortment of machine guns, shotguns and other firearms leveled at them, Dillinger surrendered to the cops. One of them was Captain Matt Leach.

It was decided to take Clark, Makley and Pierpont back

to Ohio to stand trial for their various bank robberies and murders.

Captain Leach was to take Dillinger back to Indiana to face justice for the ruthless murder of Officer O'Malley in the East Chicago bank holdup. As for his companion, Evelyn Frechette, she was later convicted of harboring Dillinger as a fugitive from the law. The sentence: a fine and two years in jail.

Captain Leach put Dillinger in the so-called escapeproof County Jail at Crown Point, Indiana, to await his trial for murder.

On March 3, 1934, Dillinger escaped, and the news electrified the country. There are several versions of his daring jailbreak. Most of them declare that a .45 automatic was smuggled into his cell.

Dillinger's own version later came to light in a letter he wrote to his sister following his escape:

"Don't you go on worrying about me. That won't help, and besides, I'm having a lot of fun. They say I had a real forty-five. That's just a lot of hooey to cover up because they don't like to admit that I locked eight Deputies and a dozen trusties up with my wooden gun before I got my hands on two machine guns.

"I showed everyone the wooden gun after I got ahold of the machine guns and you should have seen their faces. Ha! Ha! Ha! Pulling that off was worth ten years of my life. Ha! Ha!"

Dillinger lay low for a while. Then he went to a private hospital where a somewhat shady plastic surgeon performed a face-lifting operation. After that he dyed his hair black, grew a bushy moustache, donned silver rimmed eyeglasses and called himself "Jack Lawrence."

When he decided to look up Homer and "Three-Finger Jack" in their Chicago flophouse hangout, neither recognized him at first.

"How about some action, pals?" he asked. "You guys interested?"

They were. For eight headlined days they made a dizzying trip through Ohio and Indiana and robbed six banks. Dillinger cached his share, $106,000. in cash, on the Mooresville farm late in June, 1934.

Returning to Chicago, and missing the companionship

of Evelyn Frechette, he picked up a girl named Pauline Hamilton, a waitress in a South Side lunch wagon. Polly, as she was called, took him to a flat a few blocks from her job and introduced him to her friend, Ann Sage, a rather stoutish middle-aged woman with bleached hair.

Ann Sage's real name was Ana Cumpanas. She was an alien, born in Timisoara, Rumania. Until recently she had been operating a brothel in East Chicago. Her house had been closed up three times, notably through the zeal of a detective named Martin Zarkovitch. Polly Hamilton had been one of her girls.

"Jack and I are going to use the bedroom for awhile," said Polly.

"Help yourself," invited Ann Sage. "What did you say your last name was, Jack?"

"I didn't say, but it's Lawrence."

Dillinger was wholly unaware that despite his disguise she had recognized him. Otherwise, he most certainly would not have returned to visit Polly on the following evening.

But in the meantime Ann Sage had looked up Detective Martin Zarkovitch.

"I'm going to do you a favor," she said. "In return I want you to do one for me. I got two closings pinned on me and three strikes means out for an alien. I want you to go easy on the last one so I won't be deported back to Rumania."

"Keep talking. Why should I do you a favor?"

"Because I'm going to tell you I've found John Dillinger. He's got a thing going with one of my ex-girls, Polly, and they're using my flat."

Zarkovitch notified Captain Matt Leach. They both lost no time in taking Ann Sage to see Special Agent Melvin Purvis who was in charge of the Chicago office of the FBI.

Purvis was all for staking out the flat but Ann Sage wanted no part of it. She pointed out that if her name were in any way linked with that of the notorious Dillinger it would further jeopardize her chances of remaining in the United States. For the same reason she objected to a stakeout in the street, or even in her neighborhood.

She made a suggestion of her own. She was almost certain that she and Polly could get Dillinger to take them to

the early show at the nearby Biograph Theatre where Clark Gable was being featured in a gangster picture, *Manhattan Melodrama.*

"The show breaks about nine o'clock," she explained. "Dillinger will figure it's early enough to go back to the flat for a session with Polly."

At 7 P.M. on the evening of July 22, 1934, Dillinger went into the Biograph Theatre with Ann Sage and Polly. He sat between them in the fifteenth row, and he thoroughly enjoyed the picture.

Outside the theatre Special Agents Purvis, Cowley and twenty-one other G-men and cops had taken up their positions. Ann Sage was wearing a bright orange dress so she could be easily spotted by Purvis, who was standing near the ticket booth with an unlighted cigar in his mouth. He was to give a signal to close in by lighting the cigar.

Dillinger, Ann Sage and Polly emerged from the theatre a few minutes after 9 P.M. He was walking between them.

Before they reached the street both women moved away from him, and instinctively Dillinger realized that he had been betrayed. He began to run and headed for the side alley of the theatre.

The guns of Cowley and Purvis flamed into action. Five slugs were swiftly hammered into Dillinger's body and he was dead.

In fifteen months he blazed a trail of murder through the Midwest. He gathered more than a million dollars in sensational bank robberies. And most of it is still buried.

CHAPTER 16

Enigma of the Twenty Million Dollar "Gold Act" Cache

There is one and only one point in our country where four states meet. The northwestern tip of New Mexico has a common boundary with the corners of Colorado, Utah and Arizona.

In this area west of the Ute Mountain Indian Reservation some twenty million dollars in gold ingots were cached in the mid-1930s.

There isn't any doubt that this great trove, about seventeen tons of gold, was—and is—buried there. There are federal grand jury records to prove it. Furthermore, Treasury officials have been well-aware of the hoard since 1952, and from time to time they have initiated efforts to discover it.

Treasury Department agents are not treasure hunters, however. As matters now stand, U.S. government officials appear to be waiting for someone else to find the cache. Then, if the finder proves that he is innocent of hoarding or holding out a part of the cache, he undoubtedly will receive an adequate reward.

The amount, according to a deputy Internal Revenue Service official, probably will be ". . . the residual value in legal tender after Mint expenses and income taxes are deducted."

How and why is the gold there? This is the curious story:

On a spring morning in 1933, León Trabuco, a shrewd and wealthy gold mine operator from Chihuahua, checked into a hotel in Cuernavaca, a short distance from Mexico City.

He was followed, early in the afternoon, by Rafael Borrega, Mexico City financier. Later arrivals included Don

Carlos Sepulvedo and Ricardo Arteaga, millionaire cattle ranchers from Torreon, and Professor Guzman Hilario y Morada, eminent Mexican economist.

That evening they gathered in the suite of Trabuco who had summoned them to the meeting. The economist did most of the talking.

"The value of gold today is no longer realistic in terms of American dollars," he explained to them. "The current official price for one ounce of fine gold in the United States is $20.66, as you all well know.

"The stock market crash, the Depression and a number of other factors have made the devaluation of the dollar inevitable. When this happens officially, as it surely will, it will present a tremendous opportunity to those possessing any quantity of gold."

"We welcome your advice," said Trabuco. "That is why we are here."

"It is this. Accumulate gold. As much of it as you can. Put it in a secure place. Await the right time to sell it."

Borrega, the financier, was a cautious man. What if the Mexican government got wind of this hoarding, he asked. Might this not lead to complications if not outright confiscation?

"I cannot vouch for the actions of our own government," answered the economist. "Inasmuch as the United States undoubtedly will continue to pay the highest price, however, my advice is to transport your supply of gold across the border as soon as you have it collected, then secret it somewhere in the United States until an opportune time to dispose of it."

This, then, was how it began.

Trabuco, Borrega, Sepulvedo and Arteaga formed a syndicate. They purchased the gold mined by Trabuco and other operators in the Sierra Madre. Trusted agents, sworn to secrecy, bought additional gold for them from banks and everywhere else it was obtainable. Even family heirlooms were melted into ingots. The price paid varied between $20.00 and $25.00 per ounce.

The syndicate acquired a temporary store house, an old, rundown hacienda on the outskirts of Puebla, a number of miles east of Mexico City. Here, for several weeks, it was guarded day and night by armed watchmen.

As originator of the project and leader of the syndicate, León Trabuco was commissioned to go to the United States to find a suitable hiding place for the hoard, which weighed between seventeen and eighteen tons.

Upon his return he summoned the other members of the syndicate to another meeting in the Cuernavaca hotel.

He had been in a number of cities, he reported, among them San Antonio, Tucson, Phoenix, Albuquerque and Los Angeles. He had inspected the vault facilities of banks.

Some of them were adequate but, as he explained, it was not possible to carry approximately seventeen tons of gold ingots into a bank, no matter how they were packaged, without arousing curiosity.

Furniture warehouses, storage buildings and other structures he inspected either were not burglarproof or had other serious disadvantages.

"Therefore," said Arteaga, "the best plan is to have the ingots remain where they are until it is time to sell them."

"No, señores," Trabuco shook his head. "We will bury them safely in the ground—as was done in the old days."

He added that after several days of searching he had found an ideal location in the remote northwestern corner of New Mexico. There were no towns within several miles. Furthermore in his quest he had engaged the services of a pilot, one who made charter flights in his own plane. There was a flat mesa within a few miles of the hiding place where the plane, a Cessna, could land. Nor would a competent pilot have any difficulty in landing an aircraft of this size near the old hacienda to pick up a cargo of ingots. Of course it would be necessary to make several flights.

"It will also be necessary to take the pilot into our confidence," Arteaga pointed out. "How do we know he is to be trusted?"

Trabuco shrugged his shoulders and acknowledged that there could be no guarantee. He had done some checking into the pilot's background. His name was William Elliott; he was a native of Salt Lake City, Utah. He had been variously a stunt flyer for movie studios in Hollywood, a co-owner of a flying circus that went broke, a crop duster. Now he was engaged in charter flights and was ambitious to expand his one plane into a fleet of airliners.

"There are two ways to insure a man's silence," Trabuco

added. "One is money. The other is death. We are not murderers. Subject to your approval, I have made this arrangement with Senor Elliott. We will pay him $2,500. for each delivery of ingots to a designated point on the mesa in New Mexico. At such time that the gold is sold he will receive a further payment of five percent of the proceeds."

Some objections were raised. Not that the others minded the payment of five percent, which they admitted was reasonable considering the fact that it was Elliott who would take the risk in smuggling the gold across the border, but they were reluctant to take anyone else in on the project.

Nevertheless, after some debate, the syndicate agreed to the terms.

Trabuco did the preliminary groundwork. With two of his men, Luis and Huberto, last names unknown, he drove across the border at Ciudad Juarez in a small truck. Presumably they were on a hunting and camping trip, and U.S. Customs officers in El Paso had no cause for suspicion when they inspected the truck. Trabuco even delayed the purchase of picks and shovels until their arrival in Albuquerque.

They continued driving northwestward through New Mexico, reached the mesa and set up camp. Somewhere along the line Trabuco telegraphed Elliott who was waiting with his plane in Salt Lake City.

From there on the operation proceeded with the utmost smoothness. Elliott flew a number of cargo-carrying trips between Puebla and the camp on the mesa. The Cessna always crossed the border at night and at high altitudes. The pilot varied his routes each time, all the way between Nogales and El Paso.

At the end of each trip the ingots were landed at the campsite and temporarily stored under canvas covering. Not until Elliott had made his final delivery, been paid off in cash and departed, did the digging commence.

Thus, although he was aware that the gold was to be buried somewhere in the area he did not learn the precise spot.

Only three men knew where the vast hoard was cached: Trabuco, Luis and Huberto.

It is logical to assume that following the pilot's departure the truck was loaded with ingots and driven several miles from the campsite, which by this time was familiar to Elliott. Also, as the truck was small, probably a one-tonner, and approximately seventeen tons of ingots were transported, about seventeen trips were made. It stands to reason, then, that the gold was buried at no great distance from the campsite, either to the north, south or west. It could not have been buried to the east, for in this direction was the Ute Mountain Indian Reservation and the chance of encountering curious Indians.

No maps were drawn to show where the cache was buried. As Trabuco explained to his three associates upon his return to Mexico, no maps were necessary. The region bounded in distinctive natural monuments and landmarks, Shiprock to the south, Mesa Verde National Park to the north, and Trabuco had shrewdly made his location observations from one or more permanent landmarks, with a compass and the speedometer of the truck as measuring tools.

Several months went by. Then, as predicted by economist Hilario y Morada, the U.S. dollar was devalued. By executive order of President Roosevelt the Gold Reserve Act became effective on January 31, 1934, and the gold in the dollar was reduced to 15 5/21 gr. (troy).9 fine.

To put it another way, the official U.S. price of an ounce of fine gold was increased from $20.66 to $35.00.

There were further stipulations. One was that every holder of gold or gold notes was required to turn them over to the U.S. Treasury in exchange for paper currency. Penalties were provided for violators who did not comply. There were a few minor exceptions as in instances where gold was essential for manufacturing or dental use.

Another stipulation was that the government reserved the right further to decrease the value of the dollar until June 30, 1943.

The syndicate was jubilant. It could lawfully sell the gold hoard to the U.S. Treasury at a profit of almost fifteen dollars per ounce—more than eight million dollars!

Borrega, the financier, urged that they start negotiations

with the U.S. Treasury immediately.

"Por Dios!" he exclaimed, "we have made an excellent profit on our investment."

"En verdad—in truth," said Trabuco. "But we have a good chance of realizing much more. Between now and 1943, more than nine years, the dollar may be further devalued by American law and we may more than double our investment."

Sepulvedo and Arteaga both agreed with him. As Arteaga pointed out, not only were they well ahead of the game but still holding a winning hand.

So it was that the gold remained buried in the ground.

In 1939 Rafael Borrega died suddenly of a coronary attack, and it was then discovered that this conservative and reputable financier had embezzled several million dollars which clients had entrusted to him for investment. The funds had disappeared approximately six years previously and no trace of them could now be found.

The three surviving members of the syndicate strongly suspected what had happened to the money. Part, or perhaps all of it, had been used by Borrega to purchase his share of gold.

"No wonder he tried to persuade us to sell," said Sepulvedo. "In all probability he hoped to receive his share of profit and replace his clients' funds before his embezzlements were discovered."

"Quien sabe?" commented Trabuco thoughtfully. "One thing we do know. There will be a most searching investigation of Borrega's affairs. If we remove the gold now and sell it there may be complications, perhaps an attempt to attach our own money."

The gold remained hidden and now the syndicate was confronted by another problem. The period of grace for turning in gold in compliance with the Gold Act had expired. If they attempted to negotiate with the U.S. Treasury heavy penalties might be invoked. The most prudent course, they agreed, was to bide their time and sell the gold privately.

Ricardo Arteaga died in February, 1940, succumbing to injuries he received when gored by one of his prize fighting bulls.

Don Carlos Sepulvedo was killed later that year in an

automobile crash on the twisting road between Taxco and Acapulco.

Of the syndicate members only Trabuco remained. There was also the American pilot, William Elliott, who had been promised a small percent of the proceeds when the hoard was sold.

Elliott continued to operate charter flights out of Salt Lake City. Apparently he was satisfied to wait and trust in Trabuco. He did hint to his friends, when he had had a few drinks, that he expected to come into a fortune "before long" but did not divulge where it was to come from.

Shortly after the outbreak of World War II he enlisted in the U.S. Air Force and became a bomber pilot. He was killed when his plane was shot down on a bombing mission over Germany in 1944.

It was about this time that Trabuco took active steps to dispose of the gold hoard. He came to the United States, hoping to interest a banking institution or American millionaire.

No one except Trabuco himself knows all the avenues he tried but this much can be said with certainty: in every instance his overtures were rebuffed. No American syndicate, organization or individual would consider putting up several million dollars to purchase the ingots—not even at a tempting discount from the $35.00 per ounce legal price. The risk of a government investigation, perhaps confiscation, was much too great to take the chance.

Trabuco returned to Mexico City where he took a luxurious suite in the Hotel Reforma. At the time the Reforma, as this writer can testify from personal experience as a newspaper correspondent based in Mexico City, was host to a cast of intriguing characters who might have stepped out of an E. Phillips Oppenheim novel.

Among them were Axel Wenner-Gren, the millionaire Swedish industrialist, who was on the official American blacklist; A.C. Blumenthal, one-time New York City theatrical producer, and wily, freewheeling General Maximino Camacho, brother of the Mexican president, reputed to be the real boss of the country.

The supporting characters were equally fascinating; they included a leggy blond German movie star who had fled the United States because her activities were being investigated

and a sinister-looking Nazi, Herr Schmitt, who was chief Gestapo agent in Mexico. There were FBI men and minor foreign spies in the lobby, the restaurant, the bar—all over the place.

Trabuco tried to interest Wenner-Gren, Blumenthal and Camacho in forming a syndicate to purchase the gold and was turned down flatly.

But Herr Schmitt was interested. Hitler was ready to acquire the ingots, he declared. When Trabuco told him that the hoard was cached in the United States, Herr Schmitt raised the question of how seventeen tons of gold could be smuggled back into Mexico across the now-closely-watched border for transshipment to Germany. At this point negotiations abruptly collapsed.

The news of Trabuco's hoard evidently got around the Reforma, however, for he was approached from an unexpected quarter, an expatriate Rumanian banker named Ivan Nasicecu.

According to Nasicecu, the exiled King of Rumania, Carol II, who was residing in a suburb of Mexico City with his beautiful red-haired mistress, Magda Lupescu, was eager to be admitted to the United States and take up permanent residence there.

The U.S. government took a decidedly dim view of this, however, particularly since Carol insisted that he would be accompanied by Madame Lupescu wherever he went.

Nasicecu explained that Carol had tried several avenues of approach including a propaganda campaign engineered by a high-priced New York City firm of public relations counselors. Now another idea had occurred to Nasicecu, so brazen as to be incredible. He proposed that the seventeen tons of gold might be used as a colossal bribe to the United States government.

In return for revealing its existence and exact location to the Treasury Department, Carol and his mistress might be permitted to enter and remain in the United States!

Nasicecu asked Trabuco how much money he wanted for the gold.

"Twenty million dollars," Trabuco told him firmly.

The Rumanian banker did not bat an eye.

The money could be raised by subscription from wealthy friends of Carol, he asserted, and he hinted that some of

these friends were still connected with the Rumanian government.

A tentative agreement was reached. The funds were to be collected and placed in escrow in the Mexican branch office of a British bank. When the entire twenty million was deposited, Trabuco and Nasicecu were to go to New Mexico. After Trabuco disclosed the cache to the satisfaction of the Rumanian, the bank account would be transferred to his name.

Despite the fantastic dimensions of the plan, there is no doubt about Nasicecu's sincerity nor the importance of his connections. He did raise several million dollars and prospects were bright for the entire amount when he called upon Trabuco and gave him disappointing news.

He had made preliminary contact with unnamed U.S. Treasury officials and sounded out their views, he reported. He had been flatly turned down—so adamantly that it was useless to continue the project.

King Carol, who was aware of the plan, had optimistically remained in Mexico City. After Nasicecu brought the discouraging news to him, he transferred his residence-in-exile to Brazil. And there, on his death bed, he married Magda Lupescu in 1947.

Somehow the U.S. government learned about the twenty million dollar cache in New Mexico, either through the tentative contact of Nasicecu or elsewhere, perhaps through one of the individuals with whom Trabuco had attempted to negotiate. Indeed, considering the huge sum involved, it was remarkable that the cache had remained a secret for so long.

Now, however, the Treasury Department ordered an exhaustive investigation. It was carried on by Secret Service agents. It led nowhere.

Trabuco was too shrewd to return to the United States and personally attempt to dispose of what had by now become an embarrassment of riches. To do so involved the risk of being picked up by Secret Service agents or other federal officers and questioned.

He prudently selected an American attorney, a mysterious individual we'll call "John Smith," to negotiate for him.

Armed with Trabuco's power of attorney, Smith went to

Washington, D.C., called upon Treasury Department officials and attempted to arrange a sale to the U.S. Mint at the official price of $35.00 per ounce without incurring any penalties.

His proposal was rejected. He was succinctly informed: "Your client has violated the Gold Act. If, at this late date, he reveals where the ingots are hidden we will seize them. He may then bring suit to prove his ownership. If he does we will then consider what fine or other penalty to invoke because of his long delay in disclosing the hidden gold."

When Smith reported his failure to Trabuco the latter was philosophic. The treasure had been buried for some years, he said, and a few more did not matter, for he was a wealthy man. He could afford to wait until the U.S. Treasury changed its mind.

Smith bowed out of the picture. Trabuco made no further attempt to dispose of the gold cache until 1942. He was now in his sixties. Luis and Huberto, the two employees who had assisted him in hiding the ingots, had died, and he alone knew the exact location. The time had come for him to make the best deal he could, he decided.

Trabuco selected another intermediary to negotiate for him. This individual, as mysterious as Smith the attorney, was in the banking business. According to reports he was an escrow officer of the First National Bank of Ontario, California branch. In any event we'll call him Mr. X.

Like Smith, Mr. X tried to negotiate with the U.S. Treasury to sell the gold to the Mint. He was even less successful than Smith. In fact in September, 1952, he was summoned before a federal grand jury in Los Angeles to answer questions about the buried gold.

His testimony disclosed almost nothing that the Secret Service did not already know. The gold was hidden somewhere in northwestern New Mexico in a spot which had not been revealed to him. In negotiating for his principal, an escrow had been set up in his bank as a means of selling the ingots to the U.S. Mint. If federal officials were interested and were prepared to guarantee that no punitive measures would be taken, the owner of the gold would meet with them on the Mexican side of the border—from

where he could not be extradited if any attempt was made to double-cross him.

At the time of this federal grand jury inquiry in 1952, the U.S. Treasury reaffirmed its earlier decision: surrender the ingots first, then prove ownership.

Today the whereabouts of Leon Trabuco—if he is still alive—are unknown. It would be exceedingly difficult for him, or for his heirs, to prove legal ownership.

There is nothing to prevent anyone from searching for the gold ingots nor from receiving a sizable reward from the U.S. Treasury Department, if the cache is discovered and lawfully turned over to government agents—more than twenty million dollars worth of pure gold just waiting for a finder.

What proof is there that it has not been discovered already and secretly disposed of?

"Seventeen tons of ingots is a lot of gold," Treasury agents point out. "If anyone attempted to sell even a fraction of this amount through unlawful channels you may be sure we'd hear about it . . ."

CHAPTER 17

Dutch Schultz's Seven Million Dollar Box

Of the infamous *Who's Who* of ganglords who achieved headlines in the early 1930s, one of the most ruthless and avaricious was Arthur Flegenheimer, alias "Dutch Schultz," alias "The Dutchman."

As testimony to his ruthlessness the New York City police claim that during his life of crime, abruptly terminated at the youthful age of thirty-three, he was responsible for 135 murders, which his mobsters carried out with ice pick, strangling wire, pistol, shotgun or Tommy gun according to their specialized skill and preference.

As proof of his avarice, there was the steel box which a Bronx ironworker, Timothy Kiele, constructed to his specifications. It was three feet long, two feet wide and eighteen inches high.

Within this box on an April night in 1933, the Dutchman put approximately seven million dollars in thousand-dollar bills, diamonds, jewelry, gold coin, bonds and miscellaneous portable wealth.

Eight witnesses watched him make this "deposit" in his Bridgeport, Connecticut, hideout after a federal grand jury had indicted him for income tax evasion. Among them were his lawyer, Dixie Davis; his chauffeur-bodyguard, Lulu Rosenkrantz; his accountant, Otto Biederman, alias Abbadabba Berman, and two of his lieutenants, Abe "Misfit" Landau and Marty Krompier.

After packing the box the Dutchman and Lulu placed it in the trunk of a big Packard, along with a pick and shovel. Then, with Lulu behind the wheel, they sped westward to The Hudson River and north to Kingston, New York, where they took a side road leading to the Catskill Mountains.

This was a region well-known to both of them, a

playground and wenching area for many eastern mobsters of the era.

Approaching Phoenicia, the Dutchman ordered Lulu to stop the car. Near a stand of stately pine trees on the bank of Esopus Creek, they buried the steel box.

Although a large and mixed cast of characters, ranging from members of the underworld to summer vacationists, have been seeking it ever since, the steel box—and its contents—are still there.

Born in the Bronx in 1902, son of a saloonkeeper and his pious wife, Schultz turned to crime soon after dropping out of the seventh grade of P.S. 12. He became a member of the Frog Hollow Gang, carried a piece of iron pipe which he proficiently used as a blackjack, built up a youthful reputation as a thug around the Bergen Social Club and was twice arrested for burglary.

On the first occasion the charge was dismissed. The second time, caught while frisking an empty apartment, he was sentenced to Welfare Island for an indeterminate term. He proved to be so unruly that he was transferred to Westhampton Farms—from which he soon escaped. But he was caught a few days later and returned to Westhampton. He served fifteen months and was released.

Shortly after his eighteenth birthday, he formed his own gang. They specialized in stealing packages from delivery trucks.

He grew to manhood short, tough, secretive and shrewd. He possessed definite qualities for mob leadership. He was arrested several times for grand larceny, robbery, disorderly conduct and criminal assault but somehow always managed to have the charges against him dismissed.

In 1928 he became the partner of a gangster named Joe Noe who operated a speakeasy. Business was good. They bought a few trucks, hired mobster drivers and began muscling in on Bronx bootleggers, running beer in from New Jersey.

The bootlegger rings soon demonstrated their objections by having Joe Noe murdered. Schultz promptly avenged his late partner, which impressed two big-time mobsters, Dandy Phil Kastel and his boss, Frank Costello. He became their pupil-protégé. From then on his rise was rapid.

In the course of the next few years he built up a mul-

timillion dollar underworld empire. He took over lucrative beer territory in Harlem and on the West Side of New York City, acquired seventeen garages and drops in the Bronx and a large fleet of trucks. Expanding swiftly, he moved into the restaurant and window-cleaning business, then audaciously grabbed control of the formerly sacrosanct twenty million dollar numbers racket in Harlem.

His weekly income from the numbers averaged $5,500., from extortion in the window-cleaning, restaurant and miscellaneous other rackets $16,000. Although his personal take amounted to more than $21,000. per week he was so greedy that he hired the crafty Abbadabba Berman to rig the final odds on the policy slips so that only the most lightly played numbers could win.

Abbadabba, also known in upper echelons of mob social circles as the Human Comptometer, was a genius at this. When not busy rigging the policy odds, he took care of Schultz's payrolls, falsifying accounts so that the Dutchman could cheat his own men.

Understandably Schultz soon acquired a number of enemies, among them the trigger-happy Coll brothers, Pete and Vincent, and their associate, Charlie "Fats McCarthy" Papke.

These three had been handling beer distribution for Schultz in Harlem. They became more and more convinced that the Dutchman, thanks to Berman's skills, was holding out on them.

Pete Coll was delegated to protest. He confronted Schultz in the small, hideaway office where he was guarded by Lulu, "Misfit" Landau, and another strong-arm mobster, Bo Weinberg.

"You trying to tell me that Abbadabba's been giving you guys a fast count?" Schultz asked in pseudo-indignation. "I'll look into it, pal."

He "looked into it" by having Pete Coll rubbed out. Bo Weinberg argued that Vincent should also be killed but Schultz shook his head.

"It would look funny if 'The Mick' was knocked off so soon after his brother," he explained. "The cops might start to ask us questions. I'll arrange to have him put away a few years to cool off."

Schultz tipped off the police that Vincent Coll was car-

rying a gun and told them where he could be found.

Vincent was arrested and jailed. His bail was set at $10,000.

The Dutchman hadn't anticipated this. He had figured that with Vincent's past record and other charges pending against him, he wouldn't be released on bail.

On the day that Vincent Coll was sprung from jail, he and his pal Fats McCarthy declared war on the Dutchman.

That same night they invaded a Schultz garage in the Bronx with Tommy guns and sledge hammers. They demolished $100,000. worth of beer trucks, beer racks and slot machines.

This was only a warmup for what followed for many nights thereafter. They hijacked their former boss' beer trucks, ambushed and killed several of his payoff men, invaded the homes of nine of his mobsters in the dead of the night and machine-gunned them in their beds.

The Dutchman exacted his vengeance. One evening when Vincent was relaxing with a curvaceous blonde in a room in a West Twenty-Third Street hotel, she asked him to go with her to the corner drugstore so she could make an important telephone call.

"There's a phone right beside the bed," Vincent pointed out.

"I know, but maybe the clerk at the switchboard might listen in."

Vincent was obliging. He accompanied the blonde to the drugstore; he failed to notice that two of the Dutchman's killers were parked in a small green sedan nearby.

The blonde dropped a coin in the telephone slot but then seemed to be having difficulty.

"I can't get the operator," she said, coming out of the booth. "Do you mind trying for me?"

Vincent stepped into the booth and jiggled the hook. The blonde made for the store entrance as the pair of killers came up. They opened fire, machine-gunning Vincent to death in the booth.

A few days later Fats McCarthy was also liquidated.

Things were going along fine for the Dutchman until a federal grand jury indicted him for tax evasion in 1933. Although he had important political connections in New York City, Connecticut, New Jersey and Pennsylvania,

none was powerful enough to fix the indictment.

"The Feds are out to put me away the way they railroaded Al Capone," he complained to his lawyers and handed them a hundred thousand-dollar bills. "Take this to Washington and use it for openers to get 'em to drop criminal charges. Tell 'em I'm willing to raise the ante."

The lawyers tried. When they reported that they couldn't make a deal at any price, Schultz went into hiding.

Government agents searched for him. To say that they hunted for him far and wide is no cliche in this instance. Not only did they look for him in all his known haunts and hideouts but they followed "tips" which led them on wild goose chases to Canada, Cuba, Bermuda, Rio, Paris and Rome.

The Dutchman was holed up in nearby Bridgeport, Connecticut, with several of his leading mobsters and close associates.

Soon after he dropped out of sight other ganglords moved in on his multimillion dollar interests. One was Lepke Buchalter, nefarious labor and industrial rackets czar who muscled in on the Dutchman's "protection" enterprises.

"When the Feds catch up with Schultz they'll put him on ice for a long, long time," he commented confidently.

Another was Charley "Lucky" Luciano who took over the numbers racket in Harlem. He summoned one of Schultz's top lieutenants, Bo Weinberg.

"You and Dutch's other boys are betting on a dead horse," Lucky told him. "Dutch is up against a fifteen or maybe a twenty-year federal rap, and the odds are a thousand to one he won't beat it."

"That's not what you got me here to tell me," said Bo. "Go on, I'm listening."

Lucky explained his proposition. He wanted Bo Weinberg to become one of his own aides and bring as many of Schultz's mobsters into his syndicate as he was able. Bo agreed and persuaded a number of members of his mob to do likewise.

In his Bridgeport hideout the Dutchman received reports of the dissolution of his underworld empire.

"The bastards are picking my bones before I'm even dead," he raged to Dixie Davis.

Then he calmed down and began to make plans. He had his steel box constructed. He ordered Abbadabba, Lulu and "Misfit" to clean out his safe-deposit boxes and all his other accumulated wealth that was stashed away in other places. It amounted to approximately seven million dollars worth when it was all collected in his Bridgeport hideaway.

On that April night in 1933, when he packed this fortune into the steel box, he told Dixie Davis and the loyal members of his mob: "Maybe the Feds will put me away like they did Capone but sure as hell I'll have something to come back to when I get out."

It was later that night that he and Lulu drove up to the Catskills and buried the steel box on the bank of the Esopus.

The Dutchman never confided the site of the cache to anyone, but Lulu Rosenkrantz did.

Lulu's particular pal was Marty Krompier. A few weeks after the visit to the Catskills Lulu drew a crude map and gave it to Marty, with instructions to put it in a safe place. He explained that it was "insurance" for their future in case anything should happen to Schultz.

The map showed the stand of tall pine trees on the creek bank. A cross was marked at the foot of one of the trees. In the background near a road marked "to Phoenicia" was a rough drawing of a one-story, shack-like structure with a sign on it on which Lulu had lettered "Lodging for hunters and fishermen."

Some eighteen months went by between the time the Dutchman was indicted and the time when the law caught up with him. Actually, he surrendered himself in Albany. His lawyers succeeded in obtaining a change of venue to Syracuse, arguing that he could not get a fair trial in New York City.

The Syracuse jury couldn't agree, and a new trial was ordered. This time his lawyers managed to have it moved to Malone, near the Canadian border. There the jury found "insufficient proof of the defendant's income" and Schultz walked out a free man while the judge in the case wrathfully denounced the decision.

"The verdict was dictated by considerations other than the evidence," he declared.

Triumphantly returning to the loyal remnants of his

mob, the Dutchman set up new headquarters in the rear room of the Palace Chop House and Tavern on East Park Street in Newark, New Jersey.

When he renewed operations, however, he found himself in a new era. Prohibition was over. Mobs had organized into efficient syndicates which were muscling into Big Business. The gang leaders who had moved in on his rackets regarded him as an outsider.

Among those openly expressing antagonism were the Amberg brothers, Pretty Louis and Pete, who had taken over one of Schultz's profitable enterprises, the loan shark racket in the Brownsville section of Brooklyn.

The Dutchman sent two of his mobsters to open a new office on Pitkin Avenue in Brooklyn. Both were promptly and permanently liquidated by Amberg bullets. The date, which marked the opening of a brief but deadly period of hostilities, was September 17, 1935.

Schultz retaliated thirteen days later. Two of his killers caught Pete Amberg and his chauffeur, stood them up against a garage wall and riddled them with Tommy guns.

Three other mobsters murdered Frank Teitlebaum, an Amberg "enforcer," by a more grisly method. They used a girl to decoy him to a hotel room where they were waiting for him with a well-sharpened Boy Scout axe.

They chopped him apart, bit by bit, tossing the hacked-off pieces into an open trunk as the job progressed.

They then locked the trunk, carried it to the freight elevator and carted it by truck to a street under the Brooklyn Bridge where they dumped it on the sidewalk.

A few days later, by way of an encore, they lured Pretty Louis Amberg to the same hotel with the same girl, stripped off his clothes and hacked him to death with the same Boy Scout axe. They then collected his gory remains in a blanket which they carried to a deserted street near the Brooklyn Navy Yard, where they doused it with gasoline and set it on fire.

Underworld leaders knew who was responsible for these killings and they tried to be objective. The free and easy days of mob murder were over. Liquidation, they decreed, was no longer a matter of mere whim or personal vexation but something to be carried out only in extreme cases. Then they decided that Dutch Schultz was an extreme case.

The "contract" was given to Charlie "The Bug" Workman, top gangland killer, with a formidable reputation as a one-man execution squad. Mendy Weiss, a powerfully-built contract murderer whose specialty was strangling with piano wire, was picked for lookout and coverman. A mobster known as "Piggy," a skilled driver, was the wheel-man.

On the night of October 23, 1935, a little more than a month after the Dutchman had inaugurated hostilities, these three drove to Newark. Jack Friedman, bartender of the Palace Chop House and Tavern, spotted the outline of the Tommy gun under Workman's topcoat and quickly dropped behind the protection of the mahogany bar.

Before proceeding to the Dutchman's office in the rear, Workman walked to the far end of the bar and opened the door to the lavatory to make sure there was no one there who might take a shot at him from the side.

There *was* someone there, a short, stocky man who was washing his hands with his back towards the door. It was the Dutchman although Workman didn't know it at the time. He triggered off a burst of bullets merely as a precautionary measure.

The Dutchman fell to the tiled floor and lay there screaming in agony.

Workman left the lavatory, closing the door behind him, and walked to the office. Three of Schultz's key men were inside: Abbadabba, Lulu and Landau. They were sitting at a table, working at ledger sheets and an adding machine.

Standing in the doorway, Workman opened fire. Lulu went down, seived by a dozen Tommy gun bullets. Abbadabba fell next with five slugs in him, and then Landau was drilled by five more.

All three succumbed shortly after Workman walked out into the night. The Dutchman was destined to live on for several hours.

At 10:35 P.M. he was sped to the Newark City Hospital. When the cops asked him who shot him, he answered between groans: "I don't know nothin'. I was in the toilet. Some guy came in and hit me with a Tommy. The pain is awful. You guys lemme alone."

The doctors operated on the Dutchman but it was hopeless. One of the slugs had passed downward through

his stomach, ripping out part of the liver.

Following the operation Police Stenographer John Long and an interrogation expert, Sgt. Luke Conlon, remained constantly at his bedside until he died. They recorded his muttering and babbling as well as the questions he answered, apparently while in a coma. The transcript is much too long to print in entirety. Here is the pertinent part with words concerning the buried steel box italicized:

"Oh, mama, mama, mama . . . I am a pretty good pretzler . . . How many shots were fired at me? . . . John, please did you buy me the hotel for a million? . . . *I'll get you the cash out of the box . . . there's enough in it to buy four-five more* . . . You can play jacks and girls do that with a soft ball and do tricks with . . . *Lulu, drive me back to Phoenicia . . . Don't be a dope, Lulu, we better get those Liberty Bonds out of the box and cash 'em . . . sure it was Danny's mistake to buy 'em and I think they can be traced* . . . Danny, please get me in the car . . . Kindly take my shoes off, they're not off . . . there's handcuffs on 'em . . . *wonder who owns these woods? . . . he'll never know what's hidden in 'em* . . . My gilt-edge stuff and those rats have tuned in . . . What did that guy shoot me for? . . ."

The rambling went on and on. Dutch Schultz died at 8:35 A.M., on the following day.

The news of his demise made headlines, but the story of his steel box and the fortune it contained remained an underworld secret for almost a month. During this time a number of mobsters, singly and in small groups, made clandestine trips to the Catskills and dug a lot of holes in the bank of the Esopus in the vicinity of Phoenicia.

But Marty Krompier was not one of them. His pal Lulu, who had been Tommy-gunned on the night of the Newark massacre, had given him the only map indicating where the seven million was buried.

Marty was a cautious mobster. Although he was eager to search for the Dutchman's fortune, he evidently decided to wait until the heat was off, for he kept away from the Catskills.

His eagerness, however, was attested to by the fact that he carried the map in his wallet instead of following Lulu's instructions to put it in a safe place.

How this became known to one gang leader, Gurrah

Jake Shapiro, still is a mystery, but one day late in November two of Shapiro's mobsters followed Marty to a barbership at Eighth Avenue and Forty-Second Street in New York.

Marty was comfortably settled in a chair and a barber was tying a sheet around his neck when Gurrah's men came in.

One shoved the barber aside; the other pushed the muzzle of a .45 against Marty's belly.

"Gimme the Dutch Schultz map!"

Before Marty could make a move to obey, the pistol spat death. The killer tore the sheet from the body, grabbed the wallet, took out the map and flung the wallet, stuffed with bills, into the petrified barber's face.

"Here's Marty's last tip. It's a big one."

So saying, the mobster followed his pal out to the avenue and they lost themselves in the crowd.

This much more can be said about the map: it proved to be a disappointment to Gurrah Jake. He had often visited the Catskill resort area and was a patron of the Rock Hill and later the Loch Sheldrake Country Club. From reports he received he first had believed that the Dutchman buried the fortune in this area which he knew well. But the Phoenicia region, several miles north, was unfamiliar to him.

"You and your goddamned rod!" he swore at his mobster. "You shudda waited and questioned Krompier before hitting him!"

Gurrah Jake did make a couple of half-hearted attempts to find Dutch Schultz's fortune. But he wasn't the type to search for buried treasure, and he had too many other interests.

The lips of Dutch Schultz and Lulu Rosenkrantz were silenced by Charlie "The Bug" Workman a long time ago. What happened to the map no one knows. Gurrah Jake might well have torn it to pieces in frustrated rage.

As for the Dutchman's steel box and the fortune it contains, it still is buried on the bank of the Esopus, a spot popular with fishermen, hunters and summer vacationists.

CHAPTER 18

Riddle of the 2.5 Million Dollar Aquamarine

Not all hidden or buried treasure consists of gold or silver, of currency, diamonds or precious jewels. Nor is it always cached in a remote or inaccessible spot.

For an unusual and little-known example there is the missing Neri aquamarine, the world's largest, which was first appraised in 1947 at 2.5 million dollars.

This unique treasure, a sixty-pound greenish gemstone, somewhat resembles a giant loaf of mouldy bread. It is believed to have been secreted "somewhere in New York City" which may mean anything from burial in a vacant lot in Brooklyn to storage in a Bronx warehouse.

One thing is certain, however. Whoever should happen to discover it will be unable to dispose of it quietly and in one piece, for there is nothing quite like it on earth.

The perplexing history of this huge, uncut aquamarine began with its finder, Jose Neri, a poor and guileless garimpeiro, or gem hunter, of Sao Jose Pequeno, Brazil.

Like many garimpeiros prospecting in the lonely hill and jungle region of Espirito Santo, Neri at fifty-three had spent the best part of his life searching for diamonds and emeralds without ever finding a gem which was really rewarding. None which he could sell to Altivo Lopes, the local gem broker, for more than a few cruzeiros.

One September day in 1946 luck finally did smile upon him. He was digging on the slope of a scrub-tufted hill when his pick uncovered a sea-green rock. He unearthed it with his shovel, revealing the biggest aquamarine ever discovered.

He gazed at it with unbelieving eyes for several moments before exploding in excitement.

"Sao Lourenco Pocos de Caldas e Dorcas de Santos

Augustino!" he exclaimed, calling upon his favorite saints.

He put the stone in a large burlap bag and carried it several miles to the town of Sao Jose Pequeno where he made straight for the house of Altivo Lopes.

Senhor Lopes was not at home but his wife, Leonidia, a well-built, dark-haired and shrewd-eyed woman, marveled when Jose displayed the contents of his sack. She gave him a beguiling smile.

"It is best that you leave this grandfather of all aquamarines here in the house where it will be safe from bandits," she advised. "My husband will return home in a few days and he will send for you to discuss selling it."

This seemed like a good idea to the naive and excited Neri. The way the Senhora Lopes smiled at him, he was sure that she could be trusted. Besides, a sixty-pound aquamarine would be cumbersome to carry around while celebrating his wonderful luck.

The news of his discovery was already spreading swiftly through Sao Jose Pequeno. Almost every garimpeiro he met insisted upon having a drink of fiery ojo blanco with him.

It wasn't until late at night that he staggered home to his little shack in a jungle clearing eight miles from town. He woke up his wife, Maria, informed her that they were now rich and that soon she would be able to buy both a sewing machine and a battery radio.

Neri waited expectantly to hear from Lopes. After a week passed without any message from the gem broker, he walked to town and called at the house.

"What a pity you missed my husband," Leonidia exclaimed and gave him a heartwarming smile. "He has just gone away again on business but this time the business concerns you. Your aquamarine is worth a great many cruzeiros but, as you must know, before it can be sold to anyone it must be registered according to the law.

"My husband has gone to Rio de Janeiro to raise the money to register the gem. He told me that there will then be no difficulty in finding a buyer for it."

The explanation satisfied Neri. He thanked Leonidia and walked back home.

Three more weeks went by without a word from the gem broker. Then Neri went to town again and was disap-

pointed to learn that Lopes was not about. He did not suspect any skullduggery, especially after Leonidia's smile of reassurance.

She not only charmed Neri then but also on several more occasions during the next eight months when he visited her home and always was told that her husband had gone away again for a few days on business.

Finally, one day in June, 1947, some nine months after he had found the aquamarine, Neri went to town to make another call at Lopes' home. Before reaching it he chanced to run into a friend, a fellow garimpeiro named Maron.

Maron showed him a clipping from a two-months' old Rio de Janeiro newspaper. His eyes almost popped from his head when he read the story under the headline which proclaimed: "World's Biggest Aquamarine Sold to North American."

The description of the huge gemstone corresponded exactly with his own. It had been sold, according to the newspaper report, to a millionaire New York City philanthropist, who insisted upon remaining anonymous.

This time Jose Neri, an exceedingly patient man and one slow to anger, did not continue on his way to the house of Altivo Lopes. Instead he went to the police and complained that the gem dealer had swindled him out of his aquamarine.

The police investigated. They learned that Altivo Lopes had not been able to register the aquamarine in his own name because he was not a licensed garimpeiro. He had therefore registered it in the name of a friend of his, Lair Ramos.

Lopes had then gone to Rio de Janeiro and shown the stone to Manuel Ferreira Guimararaes, president of the Chamber of Commerce and one of Brazil's richest men. He told Guimararaes that he was the authorized agent of the owner of the stone, Lair Ramos, who wished to sell it.

Although Guimararaes admired the aquamarine greatly, he had no personal desire to possess it. Nor, he added, did he think any of his wealthy friends would be interested.

"Should a Brazilian buy this huge aquamarine it would be to break it up into a great many small, salable gems," he pointed out. "It would be cut into perhaps 90,000 or more stones. This is equal to an entire year's supply of

aquamarines. Do you know what the result would be? The market price would tumble. This would cause much hardship to garimpeiros, brokers and jewelers. We would not wish this to happen."

Lopes was crestfallen. This was something that had not occurred to him.

He asked Guimarares for advice.

"Sell the stone to a very wealthy North American gem collector or museum. The aquamarine will then remain intact and the market will not be flooded."

Lopes agreed with him, and an international gem dealer was contacted. His name was Emile Maksoud, and he had a wealthy client in New York City, a philanthropist who might be willing to spend as much as the appraised value of 2.5 million dollars for the aquamarine, which he would then give to an American museum.

Guimarares agreed to advance several thousand cruzeiros so that the aquamarine could be sent to New York and shown to Maksoud's client. Well-satisfied with this arrangement, Lopes returned to his home in Sao Jose Pequeno.

A few days later Maron appeared unexpectedly at Neri's jungle shack. He seemed much concerned for the safety of his friend and carried an ominous warning.

"It is said that Senhor Lopes has learned of what went on between you and his wife during his many absences. He is very angry and I hear that he intends to come here and kill you."

Jose Neri was dumbfounded.

"I swear by all the saints that there was never anything between Senhora Lopes and me when I visited her house. She only gave me her smiles and, once, a bowl of chicken soup."

Maron shrugged grimly.

"I believe you. I came only to warn you. I have heard that Lopes has sharpened his machete and intends to slice you into little pieces. I think you should hide deep in the jungles until his fury subsides."

Neri was thoroughly alarmed. It would be futile to declare his innocence. He fled into the jungles where the reportedly jealous husband could not find him.

Neri was not only a peaceful man but a slow thinker.

About two weeks passed before he began to ask himself why he had fled. He had done no wrong. He had been wronged by Lopes. After all it was the gem dealer who should be hiding after swindling him.

So it was that Neri came out of the jungles, went to Rio de Janeiro and engaged a lawyer, Carlos Branca, who started suit against Altivo Lopes for the recovery of the aquamarine.

Within the month court actions were flying back and forth with Neri, Lopes, Ramos, Maksoud and Guimarares all involved.

Guimarares hired private detectives in New York City to find out what had happened to the aquamarine after it was shipped there. They located it, seemingly without difficulty, but Guimarares did not disclose where it had been found. He ordered that it be placed in the vault of the Manufacturers Hanover Bank (then the Manufacturers Trust Company) for safekeeping until such time as the litigation in the Rio de Janeiro courts be settled.

Various suits and countersuits relating to the ownership of the aquamarine dragged along for a number of years thereafter.

In 1957 the Eighteenth District Civil Court in Rio decided that Jose Neri and Altivo Lopes jointly were the legal owners of the aquamarine. This was confirmed in January, 1958, by the Thirteenth District Court of Justice.

To Neri the fact that Lopes had been declared a co-owner was rubbing salt in a raw wound, for he was thoroughly convinced that it had been the gem dealer who had swindled him.

Neri was so incensed that he engaged another lawyer, Fabio Pinto Coelho, and began the legal battle all over again.

In the meantime it was Guimarares who continued paying the storage charges on the aquamarine in the bank vault in New York City.

Neri's second lawyer, Coelho, carried the legal fight to the Supreme Court of Brazil, which decided that Jose Neri and Lair Ramos, in whose name the gem dealer had registered the aquamarine, were the lawful owners of the stone.

This satisfied Neri only a little more. If he did have to

share ownership with someone it was at least another garimpeiro like himself.

The Brazilian Supreme Court ordered Guimarares to remove the aquamarine from the bank vault in New York City and return it to Rio, where he was to deliver it to Neri and Ramos.

Guimarares readily agreed. After all, he had footed all the expenses; he had paid for registering the aquamarine, for shipping it to New York City, for storage.

Thus the gemstone was finally removed from the bank vault. And then it vanished.

Guimarares maintained that he had the aquamarine sent back to Rio and that it was delivered to Neri and Ramos in Sao Jose Pequeno.

But both Neri and Ramos denied this. They started another court action to determine the whereabouts of the vanished aquamarine.

"I don't believe my aquamarine ever left New York City," declared Neri in court. "There are many other bank vaults in New York City and many other hiding places."

The Brazilian court agreed. The Government of Brazil backed the Rio de Janeiro police in requesting New York City police authorities to make a complete investigation.

The New York City Police Department investigated. So did private detectives. They were unable to find the stone.

Greatly saddened, Neri went back to the hills and jungles of Espirito Santo.

"I found and lost the biggest aquamarine in the world," he said. "Maybe, if I'm lucky, I'll find the second biggest stone, and this time I'll know what to do about it."

And so the 2.5 million dollar aquamarine, the biggest, most valuable ever discovered, remains to be found again, somewhere, Jose Neri is convinced, in New York City.

CHAPTER 19

The Most Intriguing Question—Legend or Reality?

Whether it be in Bangor, Maine, where a wealthy old recluse named Hiram Smith is reputed to have stashed away his gold in a potato field, or San Diego, California, where the bandit, Bluebeard Watson, is said to have cached $300,000. in plunder in the Borego Desert, every area throughout the country has its favorite tale of buried treasure.

Some are authenticated by old records, diaries, newspaper accounts and similar documentation. Others are suppositions and legends which have acquired the patina of credibility down through the years.

Between these two extremes there is another, a speculative category. Such treasure stories as these are rooted in reality, but there is a point after which hearsay and/or imagination has embellished them. Not only are these stories incomplete but it is necessary to separate the fact from fiction.

Consider, for instance, one of the most challenging of all such treasure tales, the 162 million dollar trove discovered by Milton E. Noss, a Hot Springs, New Mexico, chiropodist. Here are the known facts:

In 1937 Noss went deer hunting alone in the desolate San Andreas Mountains of New Mexico. High on a slope of Mt. Soledad he found a number of rocky caves.

His attention was drawn to one particular cave by curious markings scratched on its outer rocks. These hieroglyphs and primitive pictographs made by Indians of a bygone age are not especially unique. They may occasionally be seen in various localities throughout the Southwest and the West.

When he observed that the entrance to the cave was not natural but the beginning of a crude mine shaft, Noss decided to go inside with a flashlight to explore.

Some distance back in the shaft he came to a narrow opening in an otherwise solid wall. Squirming through, he found himself in a large underground storeroom that contained eighty-six black-coated bars "stacked like cordwood."

He also found the remains of three men who had been chained to iron rings hammered into the wall. Two of these yellowing skeletons had slipped from the chains and fallen to the ground when the flesh decomposed. The third was still slumped in the chains and had remnants of reddish hair. Apparently this victim had been chained at a somewhat later date than the first two.

With his hunting knife Noss scraped some of the black coating from one of the bars; it gleamed like gold. This particular bar he judged to weigh about forty pounds. Others, he guessed, weighed as much as seventy pounds.

He carried the forty-pound bar back to his home in Hot Springs where he subsequently showed it to James Hurst, U. S. Secret Service agent based in Albuquerque.

Noss soon returned to the cave. He brought with him a case of dynamite and a long fuse. His intent was to blast a larger opening in the hole in the wall in order to facilitate the removal of the ingots.

Fortunately, the fuse was long: when the blast went off Noss was outside of the shaft entrance, in fact several yards beyond. Unfortunately, instead of widening the hole, the explosion precipitated a landslide that hurled tons of rock, scrabble and dirt down the slope. Noss narrowly escaped death and the shaft entrance was buried deep in the debris.

It was a disaster in more ways than one. Not only had the roof of the shaft probably collapsed, but Noss found he would need help even to dig his way to the shaft's entrance. And for this he would also need financial assistance.

After sporadic digging for several years, as time permitted, Noss found a partner, prosperous Charles Ryan of Alice, Texas. Early in 1949, they established a camp on the slope of Mt. Soledad in the vicinity of the slide.

They made arrangements with Curtis Noble, an Albu-

querque pilot, to air-drop supplies to them from time to time.

Noble was en route to make one such delivery on March 4, when his plane crashed and he was killed.

Noss and Ryan had been quarreling frequently. On March 5, 1949, the day following the crash, Ryan shot and killed his partner.

When Ryan was arrested and brought to trial in Albuquerque, he pleaded self-defense.

Court testimony revealed that the partners believed that the trove first discovered by Noss had been cached by a Spanish expedition headed by a Padre LaRue, which had traveled from Chihuahua into New Mexico in the early nineteenth century.

The cache was estimated to be worth about 162 million dollars, although U.S. Secret Service Agent Hurst declared he did not know whether or not the bar shown to him by Noss was gold. He could not take his oath upon it, for he himself had not had it assayed.

A jury acquitted Charles Ryan on his plea of self-defense. He never returned to Mt. Soledad to try to recover the treasure. And so it is that this colossal trove—amounting to 162 million dollars if it *is* gold—awaits rediscovery.

* * *

For another intriguing story of a multimillion dollar cache, one which has a base of historical fact, there is what may appropriately be called "The Mystery of Sir Francis Drake's Nova Albion Hoard."

During the epochal sequences of voyages in which he ultimately circumnavigated the globe, Sir Francis took time out in 1577 to seize and plunder Spanish ships and treasure galleons along the coasts of Chile and Peru. He did this so successfully, it is recorded, that finally: "Drake and his men became so satiated with the enormous quantity of booty that they coasted as far north as 48 degrees N.lat. hoping to find a passage into the Atlantic Ocean. They named this part of North America New (Nova in Latin), Albion. The northernmost point reached by Sir Francis was approximately the southern tip of Vancouver Island.

During his long excursion he had ample time for sober reflections upon what Queen Elizabeth's attitude toward him would be when he returned home to England.

Would he be hailed as a conquering hero? Or would Queen Elizabeth choose to regard him as a pirate because public approval of his considerable pillaging might lead to complications with Spain?

Rash as he was in sea battles, Sir Francis was canny in his personal affairs. With an eye to the future, he might well have decided to bury some of his loot in the new-found land of New Albion.

In 1579 Sir Francis anchored the *Golden Hind* off what is now Rocky Point, overlooking San Francisco Bay. According to his chaplain, Francis Fletcher, Drake went ashore and attached an inscribed brass plate to a rock.

In the summer of 1937 a hiker in the vicinity of Rocky Point discovered a five by eight inch brass plate covered with the dirt and tarnish of centuries. On it was inscribed the following:

BEE IT KNOWNE VNTO ALL MEN BY THESE PRESENTS IUNE 17, 1579, BY THE GRACE OF GOD AND IN THE NAME OF HER MAJESTY QVEEN ELIZABETH OF ENGLAND, HER SVC CESSORS FOREVER, I TAKE POSSESSION OF THIS KINGDOME WHOSE KING AND PEOPLE FREELY RESIGNE THEIR RIGHT AND TITLE IN THE WHOLE LAND VNTO HER MAIESTIES KEEPING.

NOW NAMED BY ME, AND BEE IT KNOWNE UNTO ALL MEN AS NOVA ALBION.

FRA. DRAKE.

Naturally there was some skepticism about the authenticity of the plate, but scientists did confirm that the engraving might well be 358 years old and that the metal was identical to that of the *Golden Hind*'s brass cannon.

Historians, after carefully weighing the facts, decided that the plate and the inscription were genuine; the finder was awarded the sum of $3500.

For many years before 1937 there had been legends that Sir Francis buried millions of dollars worth of gold, silver

and gemstones somewhere on the shores of San Francisco Bay. The finding of the plate added credence to the stories.

* * *

The multimillion dollar "Gold Cave of the Colorado" with a wholly different geographic locale likewise has some factual evidence to support its story. In 1917, there was a hot debate in the U.S. Senate over the treasure-cave and its finder, Jim White, one-time resident of Kenosha, Wisconsin.

In 1865, when he was in his early twenties, White went to Colorado to prospect for gold. He spent two years, mostly in the Sangre de Cristo Mountains, and he had no success at all.

Then he decided to try his luck in California. He started west on horseback with two companions, George Strole and a Captain Baker, first name unknown, a former Confederate Army officer.

Baker led them across the corner of New Mexico where that state now meets with Colorado, Arizona and Utah. It was rough, scorching country in midsummer. Heat and terrain soon told on men and horses.

On the ninth day they came to a muddy river which flowed turgidly between banks of mesquite and prickly pear. Here they decided to abandon their horses and to continue their journey by rafting down the river.

They made camp and spent several days constructing an eight-foot by eight-foot log raft, laced together with rope. They placed their scanty supplies aboard and were about to start off when they were attacked by a war party of Apaches. Baker was killed. White and Strole escaped down the river on the raft after shooting several Indians.

On the following day they drifted slowly down the river with their feet dangling in the muddy water. This, they decided, was a much more comfortable way of traveling to California than riding jaded horses. Neither had any idea of where they were except that the raft was carrying them in a westerly direction. Nor were they concerned when they failed to come upon a settlement.

Late in the afternoon they spotted a small 'dobe on the riverbank and they maneuvered the raft to shore. Inside the

'dobe they found some rancid bacon, a few other foodstuffs and a frying pan. With the addition of their own flour they contrived a sizable meal of flapjacks.

They spent the night near the 'dobe and in the morning transferred what was left of the food to the raft. For the next two days they enjoyed what White called "smooth sailing" and at night they camped on the riverbank.

On the following day they rounded a bend and suddenly came upon rapids. Although they weren't all that rough, the men were entirely unprepared. White was tossed off the raft and knocked unconscious by it as it swirled around. Strole managed to grab him by his long hair and haul him back aboard.

When White opened his eyes they were again in smooth water.

"What hit me?" White asked dazedly.

Strole told him and pointed ahead. The river was narrowing between sheer cliffs of yellow sandstone.

Now the current was carrying the raft along faster and the riverbanks all but disappeared. The cliffs loomed straight up from the water and the yellow sandstone became tinted with shades of red.

That evening they saw a small sandy ledge at the base of a cliff and maneuvered the raft to it with great difficulty. They prepared to camp ashore. Strole looked at the swift-flowing river and shook his head apprehensively.

"I don't like it," he announced. "I think we should let the raft go and climb up out of this here canyon."

Surveying the towering walls, they both realized they were unscalable, and White began sharing Strole's concern.

"Soon as we find a trail out of this canyon we'll leave the raft," he agreed.

On the next day the current bore them along even more swiftly. Then the river got even rougher. They plunged through a series of rapids and as they clung dizzily to the tossing raft, they were swirled by great whirlpools and buffeted by huge waves which seemed to be mostly mud and sand.

Suddenly they came to a twisting curve in the gorge. Beyond it death was lying in wait for George Strole. He lost his grip and was tossed overboard. White, who managed to hold tightly to a rope, never saw him again.

Not long afterward White was granted a brief, treacherous respite. The current bore the raft onward into smooth water. White thought that the worst was over.

But less than half an hour later the raft was seized by a great whirlpool which spun it around and around as though it were a matchstick.

According to White's recollections, and it should be pointed out that he did not have a watch, this terrible punishment continued for more than two hours. He prayed the entire time. Then the whirlpool shot him into the main current and the raft sped swiftly on.

What followed was all a terrible nightmare. For perhaps eight or nine days the current buffeted the raft onward. Each minute seemed to White as though it would be his last. Several times huge waves swept him off the logs and he bobbed helplessly at the end of the saddle rope to which he had tied himself. Somehow he was able to haul himself back on the raft hand over hand.

White managed to keep himself alive. He remembered eating the rawhide sheath on his belt and throwing his hunting knife into the water. He remembered little else until the tossing raft became quiet beneath him and he came out of a nightmare of delirium.

He was weak from hunger; his lips were cracked and blackened by the sun and his almost-naked body had been blistered by it; he was tortured by boils.

The raft drifted slowly toward the shore and on the riverbank he saw a cave.

When the raft grounded he staggered toward the cave, seeking the coolness within. He fell into an exhausted sleep which lasted for many hours.

When he finally opened his eyes and looked about him, he thought that he was dreaming. All around there was treasure. There were huge golden platters on which emeralds, aquamarines and other gems were piled, curious swords with golden hafts studded with jewels, platters of gold with golden neck-chains from which were suspended big golden lockets bearing strange inscriptions. He saw grotesque silver masks topped with colorful feathers, lances and arrows tipped with polished onyx.

He examined a few of the inscriptions. They were not in either English or Spanish—of this he was positive. He had

never seen such odd writing before.

Here was treasure that staggered the imagination. Millions of dollars worth. But at that moment White was not interested in treasure. He searched the cave for something to eat.

He was searching desperately when several Indians entered the cave. They stared at him in angry surprise, and he thought at first that they intended to kill him.

He begged for food mutely, for when he tried to talk his voice was only a hideous croak. He pointed to his mouth and to his emaciated belly and after awhile an Indian threw him a chunk of mesquite bread. He began to devour it and they watched in silence until he had finished. Then two strong bucks grabbed him and he was half-carried back to the raft.

They put him on board, shoved the raft out into the current and motioned sternly for him not to return.

On the next afternoon the raft drifted ashore again near an Indian encampment. This time he was prepared. He held up his water-soaked gun belt and holstered pistol and indicated that he wanted to trade for food. In return they gave him part of a roasted dog.

White greedily gorged on dog meat. It was too rich a meal for his shunken belly; he became very sick. Then these Indians, too, decided they wanted no more of him and shoved his raft out into the current. Soon after this he again became delirious.

When White recovered his sanity he found himself lying on hard ground near the river edge. Above him were many faces—the bearded faces of white men. His raft had grounded in the Mormon settlement of Callville, Nevada, almost a hundred miles below the Grand Canyon!

They put him to bed and for a week they nursed him day and night. It was a narrow squeak but he was tough and he recovered.

They asked him where he had come from on the raft and when he told them they looked astounded.

"You came all the way down the Colorado!" one of the Mormons, James Ferry, exclaimed. "That's more than five hundred miles of terrible water. No man has ever done it before!"

White did not seem impressed by this. He was happy

that the journey was over and that he was still alive. He no longer was interested in going on to California. He remained in Callville, going to work for James Ferry.

On Sept. 26, 1867, he wrote a letter to his brother back in Kenosha, Wisconsin, describing his experiences. He knew so little about geography that he told his brother he was living in Callville, Arizona! The letter, which was preserved, read in part:

. . . I Went over folls fro 10 to 15 feet hie, my raft wold tip over three and fore time a day . . . fore seven days I had noth to eat except rawhide nife cover.

I was out of my hed. At one time when I was on the shur I found myself in a cave with gold and precis stones all around me. There was so much it looked like all in the world.

The 8 days then some Indians gave me roast dog to eat and I got sick again . . . the 16 day I arrive at Callville arizona Whare I was tak care of by James Ferry . . . I see the hardes times that eny man never did in the wold but thank god that I got thrugh saft . . .

Josh ass Tom to ancy that letter I rote him sevel yeas agoe . . .

Yor brother, James White.

In time the news of his feat spread, and people began acclaiming him as the first man to conquer the Colorado. Prospectors and adventurers also came to Callville to learn more about the cave of gold he had found. Some offered to become his partners and search for it with him. From his description of the journey they reasoned that the cave was situated on the south bank of the Colorado River in the Lower Granite Gorge of the Grand Canyon a few miles east of Pierce Ferry in Arizona.

White wasn't interested in searching for the vast treasure, not after what he had been through. He was perfectly willing to tell his story to any treasure hunter or anyone else who came to Callville to see him.

He remained a simple, self-effacing man even when there was a movement started to make him a national hero.

In 1869 Major John Wesley Powell led an expedition down the Colorado. He announced that he was the first man to conquer the river and publicly called White a "monumental prevaricator."

"What does that mean?" White asked Ferry when he heard about it.

"He's calling you a damned liar."

"He shouldn't go around doing that," White protested mildly. "I never lie about anything."

When a monument to Major Powell was erected on top of the Grand Canyon, White could not have cared less, but there were a lot of indignant citizens throughout the country who did care.

The "first man to conquer the Colorado" argument was long and heated, and it finally reached the U.S. Senate. In 1917 one of White's most ardent champions, Senator Shafroth, succeeded in convincing the U.S. Senate that Jim White had been the first man down the river. There was even talk of taking down the Powell monument and erecting one to White.

Some of the Senators considered this too drastic a step and so the monument remained. Powell proponents have acclaimed him as the conqueror of the Colorado ever since.

Now although this question was decided—satisfactorily or unsatisfactorily, depending upon one's point of view —several others concerning the "cave of gold" remain unanswered. The most important one is this:

Did Jim White really discover such a cave and if so, who deposited the huge amount of treasure he claimed to have seen there?

White talked to a good many people both while he was in Callville and in later years when he finally settled down in Trinidad, Colorado, where he worked as an expressman. He always told the same story without deviation or elaboration.

Among those who interviewed him in Callville was an eminent scientist, Dr. C. C. Parry. His report, published by the St. Louis, Missouri, Academy of Science, pointed out that White was honest and sincere, that he had nothing to gain by lying about the cache and possessed neither the

knowledge nor the imagination to invent descriptions of some of the objects he claimed to have observed in the cave.

An eminent archeologist, Dr. William Vandervetter of Chicago, who also interviewed White in Callville, declared that some of the objects and inscriptions he described were indisputably Aztec. Said Dr. Vandervetter:

"It is entirely conceivable that, following Cortes' invasion of Mexico in 1519, the concern of the Aztecs was such that at least a part of their treasures, or the royal treasures of the ruler, Montezuma, were carried far northward and hidden in the cave.

"We know, for example, that less than a century later, in 1604, Don Juan de Onate, the first governor of New Mexico, sought for this treasure with an "entrada" of two padres and thirty soldiers.

"This search extended to the Grand Canyon, to the general area in which White discovered the cave. It was Onate who was the first white man to see the Colorado River and who named it."

Onate discovered the Colorado. Some two-and-a-half centuries later Jim White found the cave which Onate was presumably seeking.

In it, if White's story is to be believed, is cached one of the greatest stores of treasure on the continent of North America!

APPENDIX

Where to Search for Treasure

Persons who bury treasure obviously intend hiding it. They do not post signs reading "This way to the cache." Nevertheless many of them do leave clues in the form of old records, documents, notations—as in family Bibles—and maps.

If you are interested in searching for a trove the first step is to ascertain if it is more than a legend—to establish the fact that it actually exists. In hundreds of instances this has already been done for you. Many authenticated caches are listed geographically in the following pages.

From there on it is up to you. Amateur treasure hunters who regard a treasure search as sport—and it is a rapidly growing and fascinating one—may dig in the general area and trust entirely to luck.

Professional treasure hunters—and their ranks, too, are increasing throughout the country—are much more thorough in their approach. Before starting to dig they visit communities in the area of the treasure site, read old newspaper files, court records, local histories which may be found in town libraries or have been kept by appointed or self-designated town historians.

If, in the course of such research, you should chance to come upon an old treasure map or one is offered for sale, be careful about accepting it at face value. The sale of phony treasure maps has become a growing business. Furthermore, even if it should prove to be genuine, remember, as pointed out in some of the preceding chapters, that there may have been topographical changes in the area since the map was drawn, and that some of the landmarks mentioned may have disappeared.

In addition to discoverable clues, treasure hunters

usually employ other help. Some depend upon hunches. Some turn to spiritualists or mediums for assistance. As detailed in the chapter about "The Great Train Robbery," this particular holdup was responsible for a boom in spiritualism in Seymour, Indiana.

Some treasure hunters place their faith in divining rods and forks. Others, in increasing numbers, have turned to electronics. There are many of these scientific snoopers now on the market. They range in price from about a hundred dollars all the way up to super-duper models costing $2,000. and more. All of them work on the same basic principle. They create a normal electromagnetic field and then signal the operator of any distortion by a "beat-frequency" either by oscillators or an induction balance set up between two coils. The treasure hunter uses this device as he's walking over what he believes to be the site of the cache.

What if you should be lucky and unearth a fortune? Is it "finders-keepers"?

Generally speaking, a treasure trove may be defined as anything of value that is hidden or buried, which is discovered by chance and which no one can legally prove is his property, even by inheritance.

This is important to remember. If your quest for treasure leads to private property a share-the-find agreement or other arrangement should be made with the owner to avoid possible litigation if you are successful.

If you find loot which has been secreted in comparatively recent times, the bank, organization or individual from whom it was stolen—or an insurance representative —may claim it and offer you a reward.

The United States government is one such "organization." In the case of the Massachusetts holdup of a U.S. mail truck, for example, the Federal Reserve Bank of Boston posted a reward of $150,000. for the recovery of the plunder.

Then, too, unpredictable factors may enter the situation. For illustration: Two workmen were repairing a private garage in Jersey City when they happened to open the trunk compartment of an old car belonging to a notorious character, Joe "Newsboy" Moriarty. They found 2.5 million dollars in cash stashed within.

The federal government seized the money, basing its claim on the fact that it held a $250,000 tax lien against Moriarty's property.

Should you discover a cache of gold in ingots or coin, it must be turned over to the Treasury Department and it will be exchanged for paper currency in compliance with the Gold Reserve Act of 1934. Antique gold objects and coins of ancient mintage are in a different category. Nevertheless, it is best to check with the Treasury Department to be on the safe side as well as to avoid any complications with the Internal Revenue Service over your income tax return.

Following is an authenticated list of treasure troves cached from Revolutionary times to the present. It is but a small part of the billions in currency, gold, silver, precious gems and other treasures buried throughout the United States.

NORTHEAST

Vermont. Near Bennington, $90,000. in gold coin stolen from British Army paymaster. In Franklin County $62,000. St. Albans treasury raid.

Massachusetts. In Somerville area approximately one million dollars in cash from the holdup of Brink's Inc., Boston office. Hijacked Hessian payroll near Cheshire. Another in Dalton.

In Plymouth area, especially adjacent to Highway 3 and believed to be buried in mailbags in several caches within a twenty-five mile area—$1,551,277. mostly in cash, stolen in holdup of U.S. mail truck ($150,000. reward offered.)

New Jersey. In swamps near Newark Airport, $250,000. hijacked from incinerated and unidentified Mafia dope courier. In region around Lakewood, approximately 1.5 million dollars in caches of old-time bootleggers who, for a variety of reasons, never retrieved the money.

New York. Essex County, vicinity of Mt. Colden, $175,000. gold of defecting British Army paymaster. In Kingston-Woodstock-Phoenicia region of Catskills, a num-

ber of caches estimated at 2.5 million dollars, both in currency and special one-half pound gold ingots, all buried by bootleg applejack makers in days of Prohibition. Dutch Schultz's seven million dollar iron box fortune on bank of Esopus near Phoenicia. In Hicksville, Long Island, several caches of a wealthy recluse amounting to $750,000. One such cache ($89,000.) was found in 1960.

SOUTHEAST

Maryland. Jake's Hole $200,000. plunder in Watts Creek area on Eastern Shore. $65,500. Mansion House and $38,000. Hagen's Tavern loot, both near Baltimore. Patty Cannon's murder tavern near Federalsburg.

Virginia. South of Richmond on bank of James River, three million dollar Jim Surry loot from Confederate treasury. $28,000. Peaked Mountain hoard near McGaheysville in Rockingham County. A number of caches estimated to total two million dollars, buried by Southern families in Lynchburg-Roanoke area. Near Haymarket, Mosby's $350,000. heirloom hoard.

North Carolina. Edenton vicinity, Old Man Batt's $50,000. trove. Brummel's Inn loot buried at High Point. $100,000. Cherokee "Sycamore Treasure" hidden on mountain west of Smokemont near Tennessee line. In Nag's Head region several shipwrecked treasures of the Outer Banks.

South Carolina. Hampton House $63,000. loot buried on bank of Santee River, Berkeley County. $200,000. Confederate cache of gold in same region—captured from Union forces.

Georgia. Atlanta, in ten-mile arc extending east-southeast in the Lithonia-Panola area, loot estimated at six million dollars by Civil War historians; gold, silver, jewelry etc., cached by Union soldiers after sack and burning of Atlanta. Milledgeville, Peter Williams trove, value unknown. Also Cole Rogers' treasure in vicinity of Tallulah Falls, Haversham-Rabun Counties.

Florida. Buried Mexican bandit trove on Grassy Key. $150,000. Ashley Gang plunder, east shore of Lake Okeechobee. In Everglades, $500,000. Confederate treasure approximately half of which is paper currency and now worthless.

(Note) The late Bernarr Macfadden, publisher and physical culture enthusiast, is reputed to have cached more than seven million dollars in a number of spots throughout the country. Miami Beach is one area often mentioned. His "True Story Treasure" has never been fully authenticated.

(Note) This is also true of a cache of 2.5 million dollars "retirement dough" supposedly buried by Al "Scarface" Capone in the sands of Miami Beach.

Louisiana. Near eastern border at Vinton, $55,000. embezzled from Texas cattle association. A few miles eastward towards Sulphur, $230,000. Cameron Gang loot. Various plantation-plundered caches buried at: New Roads in Pointe Coupee Parish, St. John the Baptist Parish (treasure of St. Rose), St. Tammy Parish (treasure of Honey Island Swamp), Terrebonne Bay (Treasure of Caillou Island). Also a number of caches made by Jean Lafitte. The most impressive is the four million dollar loot of the *Santa Elena* buried near Jefferson Island—which is not an island but on the mainland east of Abbeville.

Alabama. Many family heirloom and treasure caches of the Civil War era. As these are not completely authenticated they are not individually listed here.

Mississippi. Mason Gang $75,000. loot at Rocky Springs. Copeland Gang loot, Catahoula. Patrick Scott's $35,000. cache near Biloxi. Captain Dane's $125,000. cache in vicinity of Pass Christian. Between there and Biloxi Lafitte's $290,000. plunder pirated from the American ship *Independence.* John Murrell's $400,000. buried treasure at Blakely in Warren County.

Wisconsin. The $500,000. fortune of unnamed furniture manufacturer who did not trust banks and buried his money on the shore of Lake Winnebago near Oshkosh. He died in 1931 without revealing site to family.

Minnesota. Pipestone area, James Boys' cache. There are conflicting stories as to total. Best guess, about $50,000.

Illinois. Chicago area, Cicero, Cook County: various missing "collections" from jukebox, numbers, prostitution rackets estimated in millions. Also hijacked bootlegger loot. These are involved and local research is imperative. One million dollar treasure of John Hill's Fort in Clinton County. $700,000. Cave-in-Rock trove in Hardin County.

Ohio. Many minor bandit caches throughout the state. Largest undiscovered is one million dollar Dillinger loot on farm near Leipsic.

Indiana. Reno Gang's $96,000. train robbery loot near Marshfield; four members of the gang were lynched without revealing site. $200,000. River Boat Treasure at Rockport. Absalom Fields' buried hoard at Shoals. A considerable amount of bootleggers' money is buried on the banks of the Wabash between Berne and Geneva. One cache was dug up in 1966, another in 1967. Near Mooresville, another Dillinger cache, approximate figure unknown.

Kansas. Quantrell guerrillas' loot near Baxter Springs. Discount the fictionized figure of ten million dollars and the cache is still impressive. This also applies to Wells, Fargo and other express company loot buried in Dodge City and Garden City areas. $23,000. railroad payroll stolen from express office in Ellis.

Missouri. $175,000. treasure of Possum Ledge in Pulaski County. Murdered cattleman Ray Hickman's $100,000. in gold cached near Joplin. There are a number of gangster caches in the East St. Louis (Ill.), St. Louis-Clayton localities.

Nebraska. Bank robbery treasure near Hastings, Adams County. Also in Kearney, Buffalo County. Outlaw loot at Lexington, Dawson County. Vicinity of Sidney,

Treasure Express ("Old Ironsides") 400 lbs. of gold ingots stolen in stagecoach holdup.

(Note) At Wood River Gust Anderson dug up $100,000. Mormon treasure on riverbank in 1946. He reburied it in the same area. He died in 1950 without revealing site of his cache.

Oklahoma. Outlaw treasure in several caches in Blaine County. Dalton Gang loot at Sand Springs and Manford. Jesse James loot at Cut Throat Gap in Wichita Mountains (best bet: Wister in Le Flore County). Also his two million dollar trove near town of Cement. Hijacked U.S. government payrolls: $85,000. near Fort Sills, $92,000. on Cache Creek in Comanche County.

NORTHWEST

Washington. Stagecoach loot of Horse Thief Charley Maguire in Rogersburg, Asotin County. Lars Hanson $75,000. cache, Vashon Island. Robbers' Roost $300,000. trove in Fruitland, Stevens County. British paymaster's hijacked loot, Discovery Bay. Wallula bandits' $22,000. in gold coin cached in the Heaven Hills.

Oregon. Lost Treasure of Horse Meadows. Approximately $85,000. outlaw cache in Hood River County, also $46,000. Bandit Trove of Laurel Hill and in Mt. Hood area, an estimated $200,000. in gold taken at gun point from miners by Nevada Ed Croy. Mexican $50,000. cache in Gold Beach.

WEST

California. Joaquin Murietta, first and most ruthless of the state's many stagecoach robbers and outlaws, is reputed to have buried millions in various areas. The best authenticated are San Andreas, Calaveras County; Carrizo Hills, near San Luis Rey Mission; Shasta in county of the same name.

Also: Johnny-Behind-the-Rocks $123,000. gold stagecoach robbery near Eureka. Black Bart holdup of Wood-

ruff & Ennor Stage Line near $285,000. In Janesville vicinity, Henry Gordier's Lost Cache. Rattlesnake Dick's bandit plunder in Trinity Mountains in or near Shasta County.

In Los Angeles County the loot from Hollywood bank buried in Cahuenga Pass. Duncan Ranch plunder at Manhattan Beach. McNally Ranch loot in Norwalk.

In San Benito-Monterey counties, vicinity of Pinnacles National Monument, some $500,000. loot of Tiburico Vasquez, last of the state's Mexican bandit chieftains, executed at San Jose, March, 1875, without revealing site. Tom Sing's $780,000. stolen hoard.

In San Diego County $350,000. gold from Carrizo Wash stagecoach holdup. $255,000. in gold from holdup of San Felipe stage relay station. $128,000. from stickup of Santa Isabel stage; approximately the same in holdup of Signal Hill stagecoach. $300,000. in gold taken from miners by Bluebeard Watson and buried in Borego Desert. $165,000. "Treasure of the Burned Wagons" plundered from prospectors slain at their claims.

Other stagecoach robbery caches near Nevada City. Tom Davis Trove at Columbia. Billy Snyder's Lost State at Camptonville. In Vallecito $85,000. gold plus considerable jewelry looted from Los Angeles stagecoach.

Colorado. Treasure Mountain hoard at Pagos Springs consisting of $500,000. in gold. Las Animas, $200,000. stolen from Bent's Fort. The Bandit Treasure of Grand Valley in Garfield County. Baby Doc's Buried Trove in Leadville, Lake County. Natural Fort Treasure, $350,000. and Robber's Roost Trove, $125,000. both in vicinity of Fort Collis in Larimer County.

Idaho. Buried gold caches either stolen from miners or in stagecoach holdups: Rocky Canyon near Boise $18,000., McCammon in Bannock County, $43,750., near Idaho City in Boise County, $6000. Pack mule train stickup near Arco, Butte County, $215,000. In Root Hog Divide, $32,000.

Also in Oakley area of Cassia County, City of Rocks Trove. A $50,000. outlaw cache in Lidy Hot Springs, Clark County. Caches at Craters of the Moon National

Monument, Rea in Fremont County and Teton Basin. A $175,000 packtrain holdup at Florence, Idaho County. One at Camas Creek, Jefferson County, value unknown. Also Birch Creek stage robbery in Lemhi County.

Montana. Livingston stagecoach holdup in Park County, $40,000. Kid Curry's hoard at Malta, Phillips County. In Billings, Yellowstone County, the Loot of Horsethief Cache. In same area $92,000. bank robbery loot. Junction of Big Horn and Yellowstone River the $375,000. Custer massacre cache.

Wyoming. In Jackson Hole region, a favorite hideout of several bandit gangs. The best bet is local research starting at Casper. Also in Hole-in-the-Wall Gang caches to north along U.S.25. $65,000. Canyon Springs stagecoach loot buried in Black Hills, Crook County. Butch Cassidy Treasure in Wind River Mountains.

North Dakota. Big Butte trove in Burke County. Hijacked packtrain loot in Garrison, McLean County. Ditto Turtle Mountain, Dunseith.

South Dakota. Numerous caches in Black Hills region—investigate locally. Also intriguing: Archie McLaughlin Treasure, Four Crosses Trove, Lost Hat Creek Trove, Lame Johnny caches.

In Lawrence County: $85,000. Deadwood stage holdup, and $46,500. Four Directions Treasure. Holy Terror Mine stickup. Near Rapid City, the Bandit Treasure of Limestone Cave. Near Imlay, either at foot of Sheep or Table Mountain, $240,000. "Treasure Express" gold ingots.

Nevada. Buried stagecoach holdup loot in vicinity of Genoa, Belleville, Columbus, Winnemucca, Glendale. Hijacked gold from packtrains (2) in Tonopah area. Bank robbers' loot $55,000. at Elko. Bandit caches (4) in Reno and Carson City (3) areas. Also in U.S. 40 and 50 westward, routes to Sacramento. Near Stateline $200,000. Snowshoe Thompson Legacy.

(Note) There are also caches around Searchlight. This

is "skimmed off the top" money buried by some operators of Las Vegas gambling casinos and amounts to more than two million dollars. Local advice (and warning!) is: don't hunt for it!

Utah. Ute Mountains area, extreme southwest $275,000. gold Mormon cache, $100,000. train robbery loot buried in Grand Valley. Bank holdup cache of $125,000. at Silver Island in Toole County. Bidwell hoard in western part of Box Elder County. Mormon Trove estimated at $500,000. in Great Salt Lake Desert approximately twenty miles west of Skull Valley Indiana Reservation.

SOUTHWEST

Arizona. In Chiricahua Mountains of Cochise County, both Blackjack Ketchum's and three million dollar Skeleton Canyon bandit hoard. Flagstaff area of Coconino County, Roy Gardner's train robbery cache and three stagecoach holdup hoard. In Bradshaw Mountains of Maricopa County, Treasure of Horse Thief Basin. In same county: Estrella Mountain Treasure, Joaquin Campoy's Lost Cave, cavalry paymaster's embezzled funds—about $26,000. in gold.

Also Colossal Cave $150,000. bandit hoard near Vail. In O'Nell Pass, Yuma County, loot of wagon train massacre. Wells, Fargo gold shipment of $62,000. stolen in holdup seventeen miles east of Tucson and buried in the same area.

New Mexico. Buried holdup loot in various amounts in vicinities of Clovis, Artesia, Carlsbad, Santa Fe, Grants, Gallup. Hijacked packtrain gold in areas around Las Cruces, Deming, Lordsburg. Twenty million dollars in Mexican gold ingots cached in northwest part of state. (See Chapter 16 for details.)

Texas. Many bandit and stagecoach robbery caches in these areas in eastern part of state: Laredo, McAllen, Brownsville, Eagle Pass, Beeville, Kerrville, Austin,

Temple, San Angelo, Abilene, Mineral Wells, Dallas, Tyler, Waco.

Also in western part: Amarillo, Lubbock, Big Spring, Midland, Andrews, Fort Davis, Denver City, Van Horn, Presidio, El Paso. Turgen Gang $38,000. loot near Cisco. Also two huge troves; Steinheimer's twenty million dollars and Emperor Maximilian's five million dollars are detailed in chapters.

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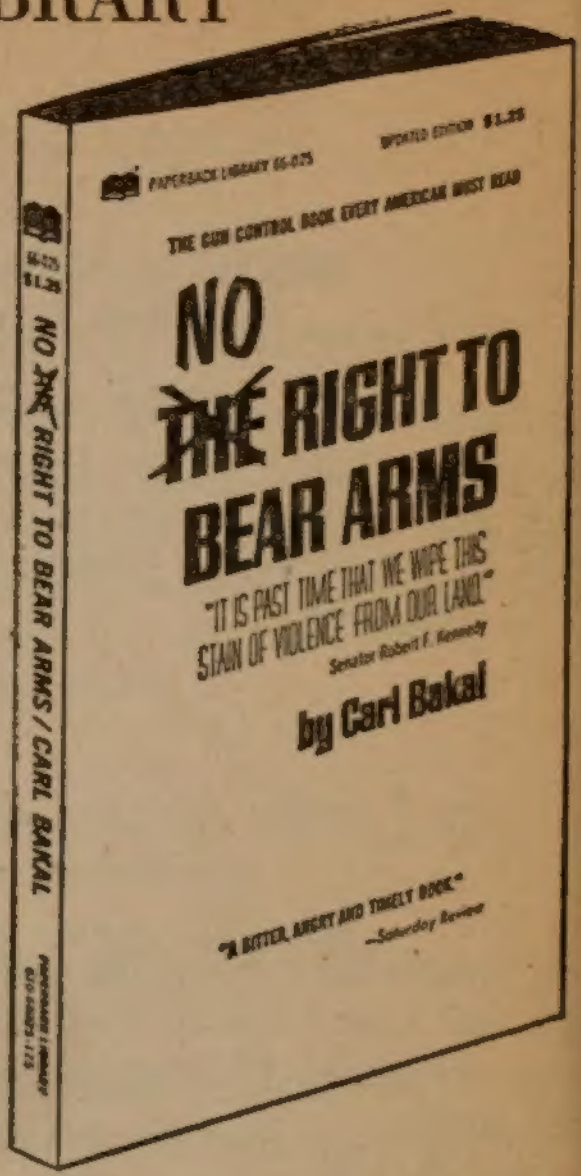
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